

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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Monday, September 16, 2024

Start: 10:15 a.m.

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HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Eric Dinowitz, Chair

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Erik D. Bottcher
Gale A. Brewer
Oswald Feliz
Christopher Marte

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

A P P E A R A N C E S

Denise Maybank,
Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, CUNY

Megan Ahearn,
Program Director, New York Public Interest
Research Group

Helen-Margaret Nasser,
Voter Registration Coordinator, Kingsborough
Community College, CUNY

Steven Romalewski,
Director of the CUNY Mapping Service, CUNY

Amna Malik,
Senior University Director, Career Development
and Internships, CUNY

Staci Emanuel,
Deputy Director, Office of City Relations, CUNY

Raymond Perez, Interim Director of CUNY
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Steven Kleinberg, University Coordinator of CUNY
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Akkeem Polack,
University Student Senate, CUNY

Salimatou Doumbouya,
University Student Senate, CUNY

Tahisha Fields,
University Student Senate, CUNY

Alexis Ramirez,
University Student Senate, CUNY

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Junior Andrews,
University Student Senate, CUNY

John Morales,
University Student Senate, CUNY

Sharon Brown,
Rose of Sharon Enterprises

Isabel Torres,
University Student Senate, CUNY

Khin Mai Aung,
Mid-Atlantic Executive Director, Generation
Citizen

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2 SERGEANT LEONARDO: Check one, two, check one,
3 two. This is a prerecorded sound test for the
4 Committee on Higher Education. Today's date is
5 September 16, 2024. This is being recorded by Michael
6 Leonardo in the Council Chambers.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning, and welcome to
8 today's New York City Council Hearing for the
9 Committee on Higher Education.

10 At this time, to minimize disruptions throughout
11 the hearing, please place all electronic devices to
12 vibrate or silent mode.

13 If you have testimony you wish to submit for the
14 record, you may do so via email at
15 testimony@council.nyc.gov, once again that is
16 testimony@council.nyc.gov.

17 At any time throughout the hearing, please do not
18 approach the dais.

19 Thank you for your cooperation, Chair, we are
20 ready to begin.

21 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ:

22 (GAVEL SOUND) (GAVELING IN)

23 Good afternoon, I'm Council Member Eric Dinowitz,
24 Chair of The Committee on Higher Education and a
25 proud CUNY alum.

Welcome to our oversight hearing: *Engaging CUNY Students in Voting and Civic Activities*

With an important national election on the horizon, and a voter registration deadline of October 26th coming up, many New Yorkers are engaged in a civic debate that will shape our city, state, and nation. Many of us are trying to make sure that no one is left out of the debate and that everyone who is eligible is registered and ready to vote on November 5th. That includes tens of thousands of CUNY students, some of whom are eighteen years old who will be voting for the first time.

I hope that for them, filling those little ovals on the ballot never gets old. But, apparently in New York, flipping the thing got old, unfortunately... I miss that.

While voting is a fundamental right and responsibility, civic engagement goes beyond voting. Civic engagement is about striving to make a difference in the life of our communities and developing the knowledge, skills, values and motivation to do that. Working to make the difference is why we are all here today.

1
2 As it turns out, CUNY Chancellor, Félix Matos
3 Rodríguez, said it even better. He said, "Beyond
4 academic and professional success, public
5 institutions of higher learning were conceived as
6 incubators of civic engagement, what I like to call
7 civic mobility." Often praised as New York City's
8 greatest engine of economic and social mobility, the
9 chancellor has brought in CUNY's mission to include
10 civic mobility. He described it as the idea that a
11 key role played by our universities, particularly a
12 great public university system like CUNY, is to shape
13 the next generation of citizens. The chancellor
14 pointed out that CUNY had, in fact, been an engine of
15 civic mobility since it was founded as the first free
16 higher education public institution in the United
17 States.

18 What could be more important than that?

19 In an op ed piece that he wrote, Chancellor Matos
20 Rodríguez explained that it is CUNY's job to turn out
21 graduates who are well informed, socially aware, and
22 actively engaged in the world, particularly when our
23 society is so polarized. He further explained that
24 CUNY must ensure that its graduates are not only
25 prepared to participate in society, but also

1 motivated to make it better. He noted the large
2 number of New York City and New York State public
3 officials who had graduated from CUNY. I'm proud to
4 be counted in that number.
5

6 In fact, the chancellor wrote that CUNY's
7 colleges were the incubators of our public service
8 aspirations. Further, the chancellor noted that CUNY
9 bore a particular obligation to our diverse student
10 population, including many CUNY students who are
11 immigrants or the children of immigrants.

12 He explained that CUNY has a responsibility to
13 teach them about the power that individual citizens
14 and communities have in American democracy. As we all
15 know, that power includes the right to vote.

16 I look forward to hearing today about CUNY's
17 efforts in engaging its students in the voting
18 process and in other civic engagement activities as
19 well.

20 And I want to acknowledge my colleague, Council
21 Member Christopher Marte who is here today. I would
22 also like to thank Adam Staropoli, my Legislative and
23 Budget Director; Jenna Klaus, my Chief of Staff;
24 Sahar Moazami, the Committee's counsel; and Regina
25 Paul, the Committee's Policy Analyst.

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I would like to remind everyone who wishes to testify in person today, you must fill out an appearance card which is located on the desk of the Sergeant at Arms near the entrance of this room. Please fill it out even if you have already registered to testify in advance.

To allow as many people as possible to testify, public testimony will be limited to three minutes per person.

I'm also going to ask my colleagues to limit their questions and comments to five minutes.

Please note that witnesses who are here will testify before those on Zoom.

Now in accordance with the rules of the Council, I will administer the affirmation to the witnesses from CUNY.

So please raise your right hand.

Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in your testimony before this committee, and to respond honestly to council member questions?

PANEL: AFFIRMS

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

1
2 As a reminder to all of our witnesses, please
3 state your name prior to your testimony for the
4 record.

5 VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: Good morning, I'm Denise
6 Maybank, and I'll say that again in a moment.

7 But, Chairperson Dinowitz, and members of the
8 Committee on Higher Education, thank you for this
9 opportunity to provide testimony as you consider the
10 engagement of CUNY students in voting and civic
11 activities.

12 My name is Denise Maybank, and I have the
13 privilege of serving as the Vice Chancellor for
14 Student Affairs at the City University of New York.

15 I have come before you on prior occasions to
16 share information regarding various services and
17 supportive resources for the amazing students who
18 choose CUNY as the university with which to partner
19 to leverage their success.

20 Today, I come to share the expanse of work across
21 the university associated with your current area of
22 focus. I am joined by colleagues from our campuses
23 and Central office units who will give you a glimpse
24 into the associated spaces and activities and assist
25 me in responding to your questions.

1
2 The panel includes CUNY contributors to voter
3 awareness, voter education, and activism in a variety
4 of ways. The panel seated before you today represents
5 the diversity of those contributions. These
6 individuals will be introduced throughout my
7 testimony.

8 I also want to introduce the resource panel
9 joining us: Staci Emanuel, you all can lift a hand or
10 do something so people know which one you are, Deputy
11 Director of the CUNY Office of City Relations; Steven
12 Kleinberg, University Coordinator of CUNY Votes and
13 Disability Services Specialist; Amna Malik, Senior
14 University Director for Career Development and
15 Internships at CUNY; and Raymond Perez, Interim
16 Director of CUNY Disability Programs.

17 To set the context, you know, when you hear
18 something that's a great idea, you repeat it. So, I'm
19 going to say some of the things that Chairperson
20 Dinowitz already pointed to coming from Chancellor
21 Matos Rodríguez.

22 But, as the largest urban university in the
23 nation, the City University of New York is described
24 as a transformative engine of social mobility that is
25

1
2 a critical component of the lifeblood of New York
3 City.

4 In a 2023 interview, Chancellor Félix Matos
5 Rodríguez discussed the idea of civic mobility
6 referring to the importance of developing pathways
7 for students to engage more intentionally with the
8 world during their academic journeys.

9 Given the CUNY commitment to the career success
10 of its graduates, civic mobility is linked to social
11 and economic mobility for students, their families,
12 and communities.

13 CUNY plays a vital role in New York City. CUNY *is*
14 *New York City*. Our students are everywhere helping to
15 make the city vibrant and creating equity. Their
16 participation is positive, contributing, and informed
17 members of the democratic process is essential.

18 Through an arrangement with the New York City
19 Board of Elections, we are able to receive student
20 voter registration forms labeled as Code D. The New
21 York City Board of Elections reports submissions by
22 borough in their annual report. The Office of Applied
23 Research Evaluation and Data Analytics at CUNY, which
24 we refer to fondly as OAREDA, provides an annual
25 report of student voter registration and turnout by

1 matching New York state voter data files with
2 university enrollment files. The report tracks, by
3 college, New York City resident registration rates,
4 turnout of registered students of registered voters,
5 and presents the number of first-time registrants for
6 presidential, midterm, and municipal elections. These
7 data have provided insights into the voting behavior
8 of community students.

9
10 With data segmented by senior and community
11 colleges, we observe voter registration and election
12 turnout to be higher among our senior colleges -- our
13 senior college students -- and highest among those
14 students enrolled in graduate and professional
15 programs, which get counted in that senior college
16 category.

17 Registration rates are variable across elections
18 with a low of 43.8 percent in the 2022 midterm
19 election and a high of 71.8 in the 2020 presidential
20 election.

21 Election turnout rates are highest for
22 presidential elections -- who would have thought? --
23 with the highest reported number being 72.3 percent
24 for the 2020 election. And lowest on average... I'm
25 sorry, for municipal elections; although, the lowest

1
2 reported rate, 17.3, was for the 2014 midterm
3 election.

4 Student voice in action: Offering voter
5 registration strategies that resonate with the
6 student population necessitates the involvement of
7 current students. Trustee and University Senate
8 Chairperson, Salimatou Doumbouya, will be testifying
9 before you today, and you will learn more of the USS
10 commitment to the work they do and the events they
11 offer to keep the student body engaged as informed
12 voters.

13 NYPIRG, the New York Public Interest Research
14 Group, is a unique entity founded and led by students
15 to elevate their voices and ideas associated with
16 civic engagement. We bring, Megan Ahearn, Program
17 Director of NYPIRG, before you today to provide a
18 glimpse into the power and productivity of students
19 punctuating what is possible when they lead the way.

20 DIRECTOR AHEARN: Thank you, Chair Dinowitz, and
21 members of the Committee on Higher Education, for the
22 opportunity to testify today.

23 My name is Megan Ahearn, and I'm Program Director
24 for NYPIRG, we're a statewide, nonpartisan, nonprofit
25 organization founded and directed by college students

1
2 in 1973, at Queens College, to engage their peers in
3 civic life.

4 And I'll start with a quote, "No one can better
5 scout out effective and promising methods of engaging
6 young people than young people themselves."

7 That observation is borne out by research
8 supporting the value of students reaching students,
9 and doing so face to face.

10 NYPIRG's model brings this concept to life. Our
11 board of directors, as has been stated, is students
12 elected from college campuses with NYPIRG chapters --
13 there's nine here in CUNY, 10 across the city, and 15
14 across the state, including SUNY and privates.

15 As bona fide directors of a nonprofit
16 organization, students on the board shape a program
17 that resonates with students because students choose
18 it. By working with our full time, on campus
19 organizing professionals, students learn skills such
20 as how to most effectively conduct one on one
21 educational outreach to communicate with media
22 outlets, organize educational events, and deliver
23 compelling public speeches.

24 NYPIRG students across the state reach tens of
25 thousands of their peers face to face each year, and

1
2 in doing so, systematically learn about their peers'
3 interests and introduce entryways into civic
4 engagement to the student body at large. They could
5 be walking down the hall to class and all of a sudden
6 they're looking at a clipboard with a registration
7 form on it, and such starts their journey into civic
8 engagement.

9 Hundreds of thousands of students have registered
10 to vote, registered others to vote, and built their
11 civic participation through NYPIRG. And our goal of
12 our democracy project is to teach students how to
13 raise the volume of the student voice by registering
14 thousands of new voters and encouraging those voters
15 and those already registered to turn out to the
16 polls.

17 When NYPIRG CUNY votes and CUNY Colleges work in
18 tandem with NYPIRG's staff and students meeting with
19 administrators, coordinating with Student Affairs,
20 collaborating with faculty and student governments,
21 and student clubs, the results are reflected in the
22 impressive number of CUNY D forms submitted to the
23 Board of Elections each year.

24 In 2023, our registration drive registered over
25 10,000 students to vote, 7,000 at CUNY alone, and

1
2 assisted thousands of students to doublecheck that
3 they were adequately registered, checking their
4 registration status.

5 In a presidential election year such as this, the
6 buzz builds earlier. During the last non-COVID
7 presidential action year, NYPIRG registered nearly
8 20,000 students to vote, and we're on pace this year
9 to reach that, if not, surpass that.

10 So far, we've registered nearly 4,800 students to
11 vote in just two and a half weeks.

12 With the guidance of NYPIRG's staff, CUNY
13 students are building their confidence and knowledge
14 learning how to properly register voters, organizing
15 daily outreach tables, making presentations in
16 classrooms to reach students across any major or
17 steady area, making announcements to student
18 government associations, and sharing voting rights
19 fact sheets and voter guides.

20 When we get closer to the election, we'll be
21 organizing phonebanks and text reminders as to when
22 polls are open and to look for their poll site;
23 organizing Get Out the Vote tables for students to
24 look up their poll site, and coordinating social
25

1
2 media campaigns to reach their peers by sharing why
3 voting matters to them this year.

4 Students with NYPIRG are bringing to life what
5 research has shown about voter engagement, that by
6 far the most effective and meaningful technique
7 studied has been to use peer to peer contact.

8 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

9 VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: Thank you, Megan.

10 Effective communication to promote awareness and
11 action remains a part of our engagement strategy. The
12 following list presents just some of the tools that
13 have been used:

14 CUNY Votes has social media handles that exist on
15 multiple platforms. Our Communications and Marketing
16 Office provide social media graphics and other
17 toolkit materials to their campus counterparts and
18 voter registration coordinators each election cycle.

19 Past voter awareness projects through
20 communications and marketing include the creation of
21 posters, brochures, digital web and TV banners for
22 campuses, PSA videos with students and the
23 chancellor's newswire.

24 To specifically look at what happens on campuses,
25 the CUNY campuses have designated Voter Registration

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2 Coordinators who facilitate year round voter
3 registration, while also planning a host of events
4 programs, seminars, and courses to educate and keep
5 the campus community aware of what may be happening
6 in national and local cycles.

7 Given what we know of student voting behavior, we
8 want to highlight the deliberate and successful
9 efforts being conducted on our community college
10 campuses -- I'm trying to beat you to questions
11 today.

12 We have invited Helen-Margaret Nasser, the Voter
13 Registration Coordinator for Kingsborough Community
14 College to share the work being done.

15 DIRECTOR NASSER: Good morning, My name is Helen-
16 Margaret Nasser.

17 Good morning, Chair Dinowitz, and members of the
18 New York City Council Committee on Higher Education.
19 My name is Helen-Margaret Nasser, and I serve as the
20 Director of the Student Union and Intercultural
21 Center at Kingsborough Community College. I also
22 serve as the college's Student Voter Registration
23 Coordinator. Thank you for your interest in voter
24 engagement and education at Kingsborough. I'd also

1
2 like to thank Vice Chancellor Maybank for the
3 invitation.

4 As the only community college in one of the
5 nation's most diverse counties, I could not imagine a
6 more apt place to be actively working on civic
7 engagement, voter education, and student empowerment.
8 This work is also embedded in the college's long
9 standard commitment to civic engagement and the
10 mission of the student union and intercultural
11 center.

12 This work is also part of my own personal story
13 as my parents immigrated from Egypt, and my dad said
14 to never forfeit the right to vote. So you can see
15 where my passion derives.

16 We have led voter education and registration
17 since 2017 as part of its mission to foster
18 intercultural understanding, student faculty
19 collaboration, leadership, civic engagement, and a
20 deeper sense of belonging that complements academic
21 programs and enhances the educational experience of
22 the Kingsborough community.

23 Thanks to data from the National Study of
24 Learning, Voting, and Engagement, known as NSLVE, we
25 have been able to see how our efforts at KCC have

1
2 changed over time and compare it to the national
3 average. NSLVE offers colleges and universities an
4 opportunity to learn their student registration and
5 voting rates.

6 Since we have begun to promote voter registration
7 and civic holidays as part of the mission, and in
8 alignment with the college's commitment, 2014 NSLVE
9 data showed KCC's voting rate at 6.7 percent; 2020
10 NSLVE report showed that number has increased to 34.7
11 percent. However, many of our students feel
12 disconnected, unseen, and disinterested in political
13 life.

14 Voter registration drives are often met with
15 shrugs and skepticism, even if Megan puts a clipboard
16 in their face, it takes a lot of time to convince
17 them to fill out their personal information.

18 I've recently taken up the mantra "Just register
19 now, and then we'll decide about getting you to vote,
20 but let's just start with registering."

21 Nonetheless, students are paying attention and
22 they do care. They are not apathetic. Students are
23 able to engage in conversations about the issues that
24 impact them on a daily basis, ask the hard questions,
25 and model dialogue across differences.

1
2 There is so much power in the lived experiences
3 of our students. Whether they are born and raised in
4 Brooklyn, first generation immigrants, DACA, or
5 undocumented, or international students, they all
6 have something to contribute to the conversation
7 about political education, and our classrooms and
8 campuses are enriched by this diversity and nuance.

9 We help our students make the connection between
10 what they observe and experience and the involvement
11 in political processes and structures.

12 We are also aware that not everyone at KCC is
13 eligible to vote, with a high number of international
14 students in DACA and undocumented students.

15 We also have to be very explicit in who and how
16 we engage in voter registration. Not everyone can
17 register to vote or vote, but they can become
18 informed on the issues that impact their lives and
19 become effective advocates to their friends and
20 family who can vote.

21 There is also a richness that is held from our
22 students who have experiences living in countries
23 with autocratic or totalitarian regimes. By sharing
24 their experiences, they can help develop a greater
25

1 appreciation for the political rights that exist and
2 have been fought for in the United States.

3
4 For the last two academic years, our voter drives
5 have been supported by federal work study students
6 who we call *Engage the Election Student Workers*. They
7 are trained using resources and develop brief
8 presentations to be made in classes in addition to
9 weekly registration campaigns and social media
10 content.

11 And as Megan indicated, that peer to peer contact
12 and having students speak directly has been an
13 effective strategy.

14 Our programming is intentional, deliberate, and
15 nuanced to reach students in myriad ways. We are
16 collaborative with several partners. Tomorrow, as you
17 may know, is National Voter Registration Day and also
18 Constitution Day, so it's one of our biggest days of
19 the year to do voter registration.

20 We encourage students to contemplate the
21 Constitution by asking, "Who are we the people, and
22 what would make a more perfect union?", letting them
23 know that they're feedback and their contributions
24 are important to the future of this country.

1
2 We work with community based organizations,
3 advocacy groups, and national organizations to help
4 bolster our efforts with resources and grant funds.
5 Our communication efforts extend to students and
6 faculty and staff via email, flyers, and social
7 media.

8 We offer a holistic approach beyond voting
9 because political engagement is constant and involves
10 everyone and impacts everyone. Why would you want to
11 sit this out?

12 We show the power of advocacy movements within
13 the United States and beyond through history to show
14 that change takes time, courage, consistency, and
15 collaboration -- with documentary film screening,
16 podcasts, rap lyrics, giveaways, and old faithful,
17 free food as always to open the dialogue.

18 We also empower students to understand that their
19 skills and talents are valuable assets to change
20 making. We've had successful engagement and
21 participation in the New York City Civic Engagement
22 Commission's Participatory Budgeting Program, *The*
23 *People's Money*, our students participated in idea
24 generation and voting for borough specific projects.
25 This project helped elevate student concerns and

1
2 illustrated political participation beyond voting
3 with direct impact on their communities.

4 I am passionate about this work, and my efforts
5 at KCC are the same regardless of whether it's a
6 presidential election year or not. Every election
7 matters from local to national, and every election
8 has an impact on our students and their futures.

9 I'm grateful for several local and national
10 partners that make this work easy: New York City
11 Votes; the New York City Civic Engagement Commission;
12 The CUNY Votes Group; National Students Learn
13 Students Vote Coalition; ALL IN To Vote; Campus Vote
14 Project; Pizza to the Polls will deliver free pizza
15 pies to your campus for any voter registration
16 drives, and GenVote, which is a youth led
17 organization.

18 If we are committed to a brighter future for our
19 city, nation, and world, this is the type of synergy
20 that is required. It should be consistent,
21 collaborative, creative, and compassionate.

22 I'm grateful for faculty partners and
23 administrators who support this work, and I am
24 grateful for this opportunity to testify, thank you.
25

1
2 VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: Thank you, Helen. I am
3 going take a moment of privilege and just say that
4 the cause for Helen being, and the reason for her
5 passion are with us today -- her mother and father
6 are in the room. I just wanted to acknowledge them.

7 Moving on, CUNY leading...

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: (INAUDIBLE)

9 VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: (LAUGHS) Yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Before you continue, I want
11 to acknowledge that we have been joined by Council
12 Member Brewer and Council Member Bottcher.

13 VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: Thank you.

14 CUNY Leading Voter Activity:

15 There are many campus-based activities and
16 programs tied to national voter registration
17 initiatives. Of special note, are the events promoted
18 last week during National Disability Voting Rights
19 Week, which ran from September 9th through 13th.

20 The campus Disability Services Offices offered
21 on-site voter registration throughout the week, and
22 two special events were held.

23 On 10th, the CUNY Coalition for Students with
24 Disabilities, my favorite, CCSD, in partnership with
25 CUNY Votes, NYPIRG, the University Student Senate,

1
2 also my favorite, and others sponsored a U.S.
3 Presidential Debate Watch Party with pre-debate
4 analysis by Dr. James Vaca.

5 On September 12, the CUNY Graduate Center hosted
6 a gathering in recognition of the week featuring,
7 State Assembly Member Rebecca A. Seawright.

8 As you are likely aware, tomorrow, and you do
9 know because Helen said it, September 17th is
10 National Voter Registration Day and U.S.
11 Constitution Day, so there must be something going on
12 somewhere across CUNY.

13 Here are just a few examples:

14 CUNY Votes is participating as a National Voting
15 Rights Day coalition member.

16 CUNY Votes, USS, NYPIRG, and CCSD are initiating
17 an awareness campaign about Proposal Number One on
18 the statewide ballot.

19 LaGuardia Community College, it has an event, Get
20 the Scoop on Voter Registration. And if you show up
21 there, you get free ice cream – and information about
22 voting processes and voter registration.

23 John Jay College has an Our Vote is Our Voice
24 celebration.

1
2 We have a list of the things happening across the
3 University, not only for tomorrow, but throughout
4 time that you will get as well. And, I encourage you
5 to take a look at that robust list of programming and
6 to consider participating and showing up for
7 something.

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Oh, I'm happy to
9 participate in the ice cream eating portion.

10 (LAUGHTER)

11 VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: We'll get that to you,
12 we'll make sure that happens. (LAUGHS)

13 CUNY Lifting Voting In New York:

14 Beyond expanding the knowledge and awareness of
15 CUNY students, CUNY upholds the tenets of its
16 strategic roadmap by contributing to the voter
17 engagement of the City.

18 In partnership with the League of Women Voters,
19 CUNY Mapping Service, a unit of the Center of Urban
20 Research at the Graduate Center, imagineered the
21 website Who Represents Me? NYC.

22 I introduce Steve Romalewski, Director of the
23 CUNY Mapping Service, and lead imagineer to share his
24 phenomenal project with you.

1
2 DIRECTOR ROMALEWSKI: Thank you so much, I'm
3 honored to be here.

4 My name is Steven Romalewski, and I direct the
5 CUNY Mapping Service, which is a project of the
6 Center for Urban Research based at CUNY's Graduate
7 Center. Our center is directed by distinguished
8 Professor John Molokov.

9 We work on a variety of different projects, but
10 much of our work focuses on helping New Yorkers
11 understand government, interact with their
12 government, and participate and be counted as part of
13 civic society -- such as our work helping to ensure a
14 fair and accurate census, understanding redistricting
15 changes at the local, state, and federal level. We
16 partner with the New York City Campaign Finance Board
17 to analyze and map campaign contributions in
18 municipal elections. We regularly analyze voter
19 registration and turnout data, demographic trends,
20 and election outcomes, all of that information and
21 data is publicly accessible, widely reported in the
22 media.

23 One of our most helpful services, as Vice
24 Chancellor highlighted, is called Who Represents Me?

1
2 It's an online, freely accessible website at
3 mygovnyc.org, that's mygovnyc.org.

4 We've partnered with League of Women Voters of
5 New York City for the past 10 years, and more, to
6 provide this service in part with generous support
7 from the New York Community Trust. The idea is a
8 simple one, to make it easy for anyone to identify
9 all of their elected representatives for any location
10 or street address in New York City.

11 This includes community boards, city council, of
12 course, all of those citywide and borough wide
13 officials, state legislature and statewide office
14 holders, congress, U.S. senate, all the way to
15 president and vice president.

16 And we don't just provide a list... and, of
17 course, you can access it on your computers now, on
18 your phone, you could see it here on my phone as
19 well. We don't just provide a list, but we provide
20 detailed information for each representative,
21 including local district office, as well as the City
22 Hall Albany or Washington D.C. office, email and
23 phone numbers, social media handles, a map of the
24 district, so you can see where you are in relation to
25 the district, as well as the overlap with other

1
2 districts. And you could easily share the information
3 on social media or email.

4 Even the Mayor and his office did this last year,
5 urging New Yorkers to use Who Represents Me? to reach
6 out to elected officials and support his housing
7 reform policies.

8 We have updated and enhanced the website,
9 including in part, by incorporating the translate
10 feature, so now you can see the information on the
11 website in any of dozens of different languages.

12 And, importantly, the information needs to be
13 kept up to date, because if it's not up to date,
14 people are not going to want to use the service. The
15 League of Women Voters excels at that, and they
16 provide ongoing updates for the website, and the
17 League, and CUNY also promote the availability of the
18 service at the CUNY Votes website, during trainings
19 and presentations, and the like.

20 Elected officials themselves, you may all have
21 used the website to help constituents, other
22 organizations provide links to the Who Represents Me?
23 service as diverse as DC 37, Partnership for New York
24 City, formerly the Rent Stabilization Association,
25

1 now the New York Apartment Association,
2 Transportation Alternatives, and many others.

3 And even New York City's 311 system uses Who
4 Represents Me? internally to help callers reach out
5 to the right elected officials to help solve local
6 problems.

7 So I hope this information is helpful. I'd be
8 glad to answer any questions and talk about the
9 service. We welcome feedback on how it can be
10 improved, and we hope it supports what you're looking
11 at today as far as civic engagement and civic
12 mobility that CUNY provides throughout the city,
13 thank you.

14 VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: As I bring our panel to
15 a close, I offer a quote from Franklin Delano
16 Roosevelt, and I quote, "Democracy cannot succeed
17 unless those who express their choice are prepared to
18 choose wisely. The real safeguard of democracy,
19 therefore, is education."

20 And so CUNY uses student voice, CUNY uses campus
21 effort, CUNY does what it does to make sure that we
22 lift New York for voting as well.

23 We are committed to keeping before the CUNY
24 community the value of the vote. Our right to vote is
25

1
2 precious. Our right to vote holds power and fuels
3 promise. To our students we will continue to say,
4 too much is at stake, you need to educate yourself,
5 read it for yourself; don't wait for someone else to
6 interpret it. Know what you know. Be an educated
7 voter. This is not about party affiliation, but it is
8 about a relationship with information. This is not
9 about your politics, but it is about your promise.
10 Someone sacrificed for it. Someone marched for it.
11 Someone fought for it. Someone died for it. CUNY
12 won't sit passively by and let it be wasted or
13 denied. CUNY will promote the vote. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you very much.

15 I just have to say, Mr. Romalewski, I feel like
16 I'm with a celebrity right now, because my office
17 frequently uses the maps, including the redistricting
18 map that you participated in, which is extremely
19 helpful this year. Because, our district has changed,
20 and there's a lot of confusion among constituents
21 about who the representative is and who it was, and
22 some confusion among, you know, staff members too.
23 So we use your service, so thank you for that.

24 DIRECTOR ROMALEWSKI: That's great, thank you very
25 much. Glad it was helpful.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: It, yes, it's still... It
3 continues to help.

4 (LAUGHTER)

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I want to start by asking,
6 uh, the Chancellor, uh, Félix Matos Rodríguez, he
7 wrote about civic mobility, I referenced it in my
8 opening, you reference it, uh, what does actually
9 mean? And how is it measured at CUNY?

10 VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: I don't know that
11 there's specifically a measure of *it* as a thing, but
12 there is evidence of it in a variety of programs and
13 services in terms of mobility being tied to our
14 internship efforts in terms of the civic aspects of
15 it and how that is engaged. And I'm going to see if
16 you want to offer some help with answering that at
17 all? Okay, and okay...

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yes, and you will have to
19 be sworn in?

20 DIRECTOR MALIK: Hello, hi, My name is Amna Malik,
21 I am Senior University Director for... (CROSS-TALK)

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you, would you please
23 raise your right hand?

24 VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: You have to be sworn in.
25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Do you affirm to tell the
3 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth,
4 before this committee, and to respond honestly to
5 council member questions?

6 DIRECTOR MALIK: I do.

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

8 DIRECTOR MALIK: Thank you.

9 Hi, so in an effort to help answer and to build
10 on the evidence piece, there are many different ways
11 that we provide and promote civic mobility, and one
12 being through a CUNY TV. We have a CUNY forum where
13 we invite and host elected officials and other
14 members of the political bodies to come in and speak
15 and educate students and speak to different issues
16 and concerns that are happening.

17 We also have our internship programming through
18 the Edward T. Rogowsky programming. So, that's
19 internships with local officials, state officials,
20 the assembly.

21 I will admit we would love to have a better
22 partnership with the Council and have a stronger
23 partnership, so I look forward to connecting and
24 learning how we can do that in a more effective way.

1
2 But, internships allow students to learn about
3 the process, understand why it's important to
4 participate, so we have those opportunities as well.

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, thank you for that.

6 And, ,you know, it's very clear, I think this council
7 also wants to ensure that our entire populace is
8 engaged, but specifically CUNY students. That's why
9 we're here today.

10 So, you mentioned a number of things, but just
11 going back to the question, is there any way or any
12 goals CUNY has set for itself?

13 So, for example, placing interns in a certain
14 number of council member and assembly member's
15 offices? Registering a certain percentage of students
16 to vote? Having turnout for CUNY students to be a
17 certain amount?

18 Are any of those metrics used or looked at as we
19 talk about civic mobility?

20 DIRECTOR AHEARN: I was going to add something
21 before the goals part on civic mobility, just, uh, I
22 have been working for NYPIRG for about 17 years now,
23 so I have seen a few generations of students go
24 through, and it is not uncommon that I will work with
25 someone who now works for a nonprofit organization or

1
2 in Council staff or state, that have said ,you know,
3 I wasn't really involved until I registered to vote
4 or I ,you know, saw that there was a food drive going
5 on, and it's something I remembered from being in
6 high school, and I participated, and then I came
7 around for your next meeting, and, then, I learned
8 about a state policy. And, then I went to the
9 workshop where you were talking about the process
10 that the state budget gets passed. And they grew a
11 life of engagement and service to the community
12 through just that one, small step.

13 So, registering to vote is often that first step.
14 And when you have a robust ,you know, student affairs
15 life on campus where there... it's not just that you
16 register to vote, and, then, you go about your life
17 and you're not continually engaged. Just the
18 educational experience is improved and civics becomes
19 just a regular part of your day and your life.

20 VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: So, in response to the
21 metrics question, I am going to turn again to my
22 Resource panel and see if anybody can tell me whether
23 or not we are monitoring those metrics in particular.
24 Because, I'll tell you, from my personal experience
25 in preparing for today, when I look at what we know

1
2 about registration and turnout, I'm saying we can do
3 better than that. I am definitely onboard with that,
4 and I want to figure out what things we need to put
5 in place. But, I am going to turn and see if anyone
6 can offer me anything?

7 DEPUTY DIRECTOR EMANUEL: We've never done any...

8 VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: We've not done anything,
9 we're on it. Chair Dinowitz, I'm all over that.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Uhm, you were going to add
11 something?

12 DIRECTOR AHEARN: Yes, I was just going to say
13 that we also track the number of people we register
14 every year, and strive to match it up with
15 enrollments and to beat our enrollment adjusted goals
16 from year to year.

17 So, we are competitive with ourselves, and like
18 to improve on the voter registration numbers every
19 year.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, and I want to go to
21 the data. It's sort of in line with the metrics
22 and... accountability is the wrong... I guess
23 accountability would be the word if, uhm... One is
24 the data that you collect, public. Is it posted on
25

1
2 your website? Again, number of registrants, number of
3 people who have voted in in certain elections?

4 And secondly, for how long have you been
5 collecting this data? Meaning, did you look at it now
6 for this hearing to look back? Or have you
7 continually... is this something you've been looking
8 at since, I guess, 2014 was one of the midterm
9 elections that you referenced?

10 VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: Two... 2012, I think, is
11 when we have data... how this the length of time
12 we've been collecting.

13 So Staci, you want to... Okay. A little bit
14 longer than that. Staci Emanuel can tell you about
15 that.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: We'll swear you in as well.
17 Please raise your right hand. Do you affirm to
18 tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the
19 truth, in your testimony before this committee, and
20 to respond honestly to council member questions?

21 DEPUTY DIRECTOR EMANUEL: I do.

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you, and please state
23 your name for the record?

24 DEPUTY DIRECTOR EMANUEL: Sure, Stacy Emanuel; I'm
25 the Deputy Director in the Office of City Relations,

1
2 but prior, also, I served as the prior voter
3 registration coordinator for the university.

4 So, we have been keeping two sets of tracking of
5 data, one through our Code D, which Megan from NYPIRG
6 is familiar with.

7 We have an arrangement with the New York City
8 Board of Elections in which we can order voter
9 registration forms that have a code, a little letter
10 that says "D" in order for us to track these forms
11 that are being submitted to the New York City Board
12 of Elections. So we have been keeping track of those
13 that are submitted. The only caveat is that when they
14 report it in the annual report, it's only by borough,
15 so it's not by college, so it's not as useful.

16 But since 2012, we've been collecting university
17 wide data through the New York State Board of
18 Elections. We get the voter data file after each
19 general election, and then we match it with the
20 student enrollment based on those that are eligible
21 to vote. And, then, that information is disseminated
22 to the voter registration coordinators to help them
23 with their efforts on their individual campuses.

24 So it's been collected a lot longer and not, you
25 know, just for this hearing, the data.

1 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you, can you...

2 DEPUTY DIRECTOR EMANUEL: and we (INAUDIBLE) for
3 that... (CROSS-TALK)
4

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Can you just clarify, you
6 said you collect the voter... Well, when you
7 referenced the general election, you said you collect
8 the voter registration data or the voter turnout
9 data?

10 DEPUTY DIRECTOR EMANUEL: Both. So, we request a
11 voter data file from the New York State Board of
12 Elections each year, but we do it after the general
13 election has happened. And then our Institutional
14 Research Office, OAREDA, which Vice Chancellor
15 Maybank mentioned, they then take that voter data
16 file and they match it with our student enrollment
17 records.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And...

19 DEPUTY DIRECTOR EMANUEL: And that's how we get
20 the voter registration rate for the University as a
21 whole, and that's how we get the turnout, the
22 participation on election day.

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Does that include
24 participation in the primary elections?
25

1
2 DEPUTY DIRECTOR EMANUEL: No, we only do the
3 general election.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: What's the thinking behind
5 just doing general elections?

6 DEPUTY DIRECTOR EMANUEL: Because, I don't think
7 there was any thinking other than, you know, it's a
8 lot of time involved, and it's a huge data file. So,
9 for our Research Office, they're able to handle just
10 doing it for the general election. It's the final
11 election before we know who's voted into whatever
12 particular office at that time.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: All right, I would posit
14 that civic engagement, I think necessitates the
15 engagement of students in a primary election where in
16 many districts, it is the primary election that
17 determines who the representative will be.

18 DEPUTY DIRECTOR EMANUEL: Understood, understood.
19 Something for us to look at moving forward. But...

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, I would say that's...

21 DEPUTY DIRECTOR EMANUEL: I hear what you're
22 saying.

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You know, one of the... As
24 we talk about metrics and accountability and trying
25 to better the process...

1
2 DEPUTY DIRECTOR EMANUEL: Mm-hmm

3 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I would think that would be
4 one of the most critical ways. And particularly, as
5 was mentioned, municipal elections, which don't
6 always have the highest turnouts to begin with, are
7 even lower in the in the primary election, which
8 again, really determine, really engage people in New
9 York City. And that's, in many cases, where the
10 elected officials are doing the door knocking, where
11 they're doing the phone calls. That's really where,
12 you know, it ramps up.

13 So you're collecting the data for the general
14 election, registration, and turn up for the general
15 election. How do CUNY's curricula, in various fields,
16 support students' development of the combination the,
17 quote, "combination of knowledge, skills, values, and
18 motivation", that can make a difference in the civic
19 life of our communities?

20 VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: So there are different
21 activities in the list that you'll get then... is a
22 partial list of things happening across the
23 university. I know at one of the schools they
24 actually gave me the names of the courses. So,
25 Macaulay Honors College has two courses that they

1 held up, in particular, one is Decision 2024, the
2 Election in Real Time. That would be MHC 331, if you
3 would like to take it.
4

5 The other course at Macaulay is MHC 347, and it
6 is Ecosystems of Democracy. So there are faculty that
7 are very much aligned with offering classes,
8 particularly in the semester. And we can check and
9 see if others are doing the same, but those were the
10 ones that I had at the ready.

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Cool.

12 Are there efforts to integrate civic engagement
13 into courses that may not be political science
14 courses, but could work with that overlap? Is there
15 any effort or talk of doing that? Yes, please?

16 DIRECTOR NASSER: I can speak on behalf of efforts
17 at Kingsborough with the Student Union and
18 Intercultural Center.

19 Our work is heavily dependent on collaborating
20 with faculty. So anytime we have an elected official
21 come to speak, documentary film screenings, all of
22 the events are carefully planned in conjunction with
23 when classes are in session, with an invitation to
24 the faculty to consider bringing their classes to the
25 event as well. Recognizing that if students are... if

1 we're expecting students to walk through the door,
2 even with the best free food, they may not. But if a
3 faculty integrates it into their curriculum with
4 extra credit or part of the syllabus, then they are
5 more inclined to come, more inclined to be engaged
6 regardless of the discipline.
7

8 So I've worked closely with many faculty over the
9 years. I know a bit of their curriculum, so I can
10 also anticipate what the themes are what we can have
11 a broad civic engagement lens. So English faculty
12 might be talking about immigration. You know, history
13 classes might be talking about the right to vote, the
14 environment, climate change. When I know that those
15 themes extend several different disciplines, I can
16 plan events around those and taking that civic
17 engagement guess work out for the faculty and develop
18 it with them.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I mean, I'm looking at
20 NYPIRG website, for example, and, you know, there are
21 a number of issues that NYPIRG touches on, like
22 higher education funding, hunger, homeless outreach,
23 environment, mass transit, and consumer protection.

24 So, it also sounds like there's a lot of room to
25 grow in terms of saying different majors and courses

1
2 that can integrate the civic engagement, which is
3 already work that you're doing.

4 DIRECTOR AHEARN: Yes, and we also we have service
5 based projects, the voter registration is housed
6 within, like, the public service kind of thing. We
7 also have a small claims court action center where
8 prelaw students counsel people going through the
9 small claims court on the procedures of civil courts
10 and the goods strives that I mentioned before, but
11 it's very broad, so whatever issue a student is
12 interested in, there's typically a home for them in
13 NYPIRG. But, also part of the dual mission is to
14 train students on the bread and butter organizing
15 tactics and skills that can be unleashed on any
16 issue, postgraduation, or even during school, that
17 any issue that is important to them.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. I want to turn
19 it over to Council Member Brewer.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much.

21 I have to say I think you do have a lot of
22 statistics, and I really appreciate it. And getting
23 them from the Board of Elections is really
24 impressive. Congratulations.

1
2 Their website still has, I think, June as the
3 voting locations, not November. At least that was
4 true last week. I loved them, but thank goodness for
5 you at CUNY.

6 So, I have a couple questions.

7 First of all, I think it's good that you're doing
8 all of this, but there's still a lot of obstacles to
9 getting people to vote.

10 So, from the amazing woman from Kingsborough,
11 your parents should be very proud, you're an doing
12 amazing job, very "thinking outside the box".

13 But, how... there has to be more because, despite
14 your good statistics, there could be better.

15 So the question is, is it funding? Is it maybe
16 we need to have some kind of legislation that says
17 civics has to be more incorporated into the courses?
18 I don't know. What other... what are some of the
19 barriers? Now, some of them are not great elected
20 officials. Maybe that's part of it, I'm just saying.

21 So, you need it... it's a combination of
22 figuring out what's of interest to students and then
23 trying to hook them up to policies that are of
24 interest to them.

1
2 So, how do you... what are some of the obstacles
3 that you'd like to have, uh, overcome in order to get
4 more people both to register and to vote? It's one
5 thing to register, but another thing to vote.

6 DIRECTOR NASSER: Thank you for the question.

7 Yes, the obstacles to registration, it takes
8 persistence. I find that the paper forms are a much
9 more effective way to grab the students rather than
10 saying, hey, take this link and cross your fingers
11 that they'll continue to fill it out as they walk
12 away. I hold them at the table, I say fill this out
13 right now, you know all the answers. This is not
14 complicated.

15 I do educate them when they're choosing a party
16 to let them know that it could impact their
17 participation in a primary election. And, then, I
18 take it and I put them in the mailbox.

19 So recognizing that, just that form of giving it
20 to them, getting it to the post office, filling it
21 out, those things get lost a lot of the time in in
22 the hands of the students, unfortunately. So, they
23 fill it out on the spot with me.

24 There's also something that's fairly new, I think
25 it's two or three years old now, called Voter

1
2 Education Week, which now is a new national civic
3 holiday from October 7th to 11th, and it has several
4 days, each day has a theme, you know, make a plan to
5 vote, understand the ballot is one day, know where
6 you need to go to check your voter status or check
7 your polling place. So, I think making sure that our
8 students are aware of those things prior to the
9 election is a great timing.

10 And, also, the early voting does help
11 tremendously. So, we're telling our students, look,
12 you can start voting from now, taking again,
13 anticipating any excuses that they might come up with
14 and say, okay, you can't make it on election day, no
15 problem, you can go here, here, here, and here on
16 these days and make sure that your vote is cast.

17 So those types of things are beneficial. I will
18 confess that I'm a resident of Long Island, and there
19 the voting... early voting is different. You can go
20 to any voting site in your county, so you're not
21 assigned a voting site.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: We're trying to get there
23 here. But...

24 DIRECTOR NASSER: Yes. And I think that that would
25 help tremendously as well, because if I say, okay,

1
2 Kingsborough students, we're going to vote early on
3 these days, and we can take a group of students to
4 that designated location as a group, I think that
5 that would help tremendously as well, because we're
6 taking them to a concentrated poll site where all of
7 our Brooklyn residents, for instance, could vote.

8 I also would love to see Kingsborough CUNY
9 campuses as sites for early voting as well. I think
10 that that would help...

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Well, the problem with
12 that though is that they will then be taking over the
13 gym, the cafeteria, or something for nine days.

14 DIRECTOR NASSER: Right, okay...

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And, before you know it,
16 you're gonna have people complaining about that.

17 DIRECTOR NASSER: Mm-hmm

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So, I just warn you.

19 DIRECTOR NASSER: Thank you for the warning...

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: We're trying to pull out
21 of schools...

22 DIRECTOR NASSER: I see...

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So, be careful what you
24 ask for...

25 DIRECTOR NASSER: Sure, sure, thank you.

1 It would get the turnout, though.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yeah, but, you wouldn't
3 be... You'd have other complaints... Unless you can
4 find a place that's absolutely unused that you could
5 have the sites.

6 DIRECTOR NASSER: Sure, thank you.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. So, funding, how
8 does the funding work for Kingsborough or elsewhere
9 in terms of the persons who are doing this?

10 DIRECTOR NASSER: So funding... This is a labor of
11 love. This is something that I've added into my job
12 description. But, again, a lot of those national
13 organizations that I've cited are very helpful. They
14 give free resources, the materials, the Instagram
15 graphics, the emails, are already drafted. So, a lot
16 of these organizations are huge supports to make the
17 lift a lot easier. There are grant funds that are
18 available as well. And, as I mentioned ,you know,
19 free pizza, which I was pretty surprised was that
20 easy, a Pizzeria called and said, I'm here to deliver
21 your ten pies. (TIMER CHIMES) And, I said, I didn't
22 order ten pies. And I thought I was being scammed,
23 but, then, it was the effortless of me just filling
24 out this form, and the pizza showed up.

1
2 VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: If I may add, may I?
3 BMCC, The Borough of Manhattan Community College,
4 identified some funding sources that they have, some
5 grants they've received, and so they have \$9,000 in a
6 grant from Help America Vote, and that's a mini
7 grant; the National Voter Registration Day Community
8 College Grant of \$2,413. And, then, they have the
9 Vote Early Day funding of a \$1,000 and a \$5,000 grant
10 from Ask Every Student.

11 So there are some resources out there. We may
12 need to promote them a little more for the other
13 campuses to make sure that everybody gets a little
14 something because otherwise, it's a CUNY job. It's
15 what you do in addition to what you do.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, and are there
17 colleges around the country, not to say that maybe
18 CUNY is doing best, certainly a possibility, that you
19 look to in order to see if there are ways that we
20 could increase?

21 DIRECTOR NASSER: CUNY and New York are very
22 unique given our student population as well. But,
23 there are... There is an organization called the All
24 in to Vote Challenge, and they provide... When we
25 submit our action plan each year, they will score it,

1
2 and then they'll compare it to national averages and
3 give you feedback. So, that's another great resource,
4 and they do rank the community colleges, they rank
5 the schools by grouping as well. So, it helps you
6 pick a comparable goal of an institution that would
7 align with the demographics and the makeup of your
8 own institution.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I mean, I have a little
10 bit of a good perspective, I have a lot of CUNY
11 interns, and I teach at Hunter. And I will tell you
12 that even as teaching seniors, nobody has ever opened
13 a newspaper, ever. And, I understand that's the world
14 that we live in, but that's a challenge that needs...
15 It's part of civic education.

16 And, the second thing is ,you know, I would
17 actually suggest, I get a little frustrated, because
18 some of my colleagues, not these two, (LAUGHTER)
19 don't meet those students who are talking about
20 journalism or have a school project. They don't. So,
21 they call me, they call somebody here. I think it
22 would be great to have the students en masse, call
23 Council, Assembly, whatever they want, on a student
24 project, and then keep tally -- who responds and who
25 doesn't, and then publish it. You'd get some action,

1
2 because it is... That's what we're supposed to be
3 doing. Because, it's not a legitimate reporter or
4 something that is... they will not respond. So, I
5 suggest that as a project. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Just one quick question,
7 and then I will turn it over to Council Member
8 Bottcher.

9 The election coordinator at each school, Miss
10 Nasser, you said it's a labor of love. I think that's
11 wonderful. Is CUNY sort of relying on that model,
12 though? Is it, I don't know, sustainable to have, at
13 every single campus, this election coordinator, and
14 hoping you find someone who just, like, really cares
15 and wants to do it out of the goodness of their
16 heart?

17 VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: I am not certain how
18 each of them gets appointed or selected or voluntold
19 to do this, but ,you know, in most instances, it is
20 someone who is willing and wanting to that. Now, I
21 don't know...

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And it is at every campus,
23 though, right?

24 VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: I'm sorry?
25

1 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: There is one at every
2 campus...
3

4 VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: Each campus has a
5 coordinator.

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay.

7 DEPUTY DIRECTOR EMANUEL: Yes, the Voter
8 Registration Coordinator comes through the campus.
9 So, whether it's the president's office or the VP of
10 Student Affairs, they select who that person would be
11 to serve as the Voter Registration Coordinator on
12 that campus.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. And that's a
14 fulltime faculty member?

15 DEPUTY DIRECTOR EMANUEL: No, it's someone in the
16 Office of Student Affairs. So, that person... (CROSS-
17 TALK)

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Let me rephrase it, it is
19 assigned to a fulltime faculty member?

20 DEPUTY DIRECTOR EMANUEL: Right, a fulltime
21 staffer, yes.

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay.

23 DEPUTY DIRECTOR EMANUEL: And it's usually part of
24 their other responsibilities that they may have in
25 their portfolio...

1 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Right, okay.

2 DEPUTY DIRECTOR EMANUEL: as well. So, it's not a
3 standalone ,you know, your... It's just the Voter
4 Registration Coordinator, and that's it.

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. I'm sorry,
6 Council Member Bottcher, just one other thing, in
7 terms of the... You mentioned a lot about early
8 voting, maybe making the colleges a poll site, they
9 can vote anywhere, all wonderful ideas. Do you also
10 assist students in applying for mail-in ballots? Is
11 that part of your effort?

12 DIRECTOR NASSER: Yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, and that's across
14 campuses?

15 DEPUTY DIRECTOR EMANUEL: That's the students
16 and...

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Well, one of the ways to
18 increase the voter participation is to have students
19 mail in their ballots rather than go to a poll site.

20 So, I'm just asking if it is part of the
21 structure of this system, that across all campuses,
22 you are assisting voters or encouraging them to apply
23 for a mail-in ballot?
24

1
2 DEPUTY DIRECTOR EMANUEL: We wouldn't be able
3 to... It might vary by campus, but we wouldn't...

4 DIRECTOR AHEARN: So, at the campuses that have
5 NYPIRG chapters, we produce a guide on absentee mail-
6 in voting, and when deadlines are, and, then, it's
7 part of our Get Out the Vote regular outreach. So,
8 we're reserving tables in high traffic areas of
9 campus to stop students and, say, hey, have you made
10 your voter plan? When are going to go vote? Pick a
11 date, pick a time, where is your poll site? And ,you
12 know, as they are making their voter plan, if
13 they're, like, I not gonna make it to the polls, then
14 we bring out the mail-in voting.

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, thank you. I am going
16 to turn it over to Council Member Bottcher.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHER: Hi.

18 DEPUTY DIRECTOR EMANUEL: Hello.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHER: Is every CUNY student
20 provided with voter registration forms at the
21 beginning of the school year?

22 DEPUTY DIRECTOR EMANUEL: Yes, they are supposed
23 to be provided. Usually it's done electronically via
24 an email with the link to a voter registration form.
25 Also, voter registration forms -- and Helen could

1
2 probably speak to this as well, it's provided to
3 incoming freshman students and transfer students as
4 part of their orientation. They are given a form and
5 then asked to take it back. And, then, I know also in
6 the Office of Accessibility Services, if any one
7 student comes in to ask for services, they are asked
8 if they are registered to vote and assisted in
9 completing a voter registration form if they do so.
10 So...

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: That's provided
12 electronically every year or something that's emailed
13 to students?

14 DEPUTY DIRECTOR EMANUEL: Yes, all of them...
15 Right, it's a mandate actually from the state that
16 every campus is to have a communication that's voter
17 themed, and with it a link to the voter registration
18 form as well as absentee ballot form.

19 VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: And you'll see that in
20 the list that a number of the campuses submit it as a
21 part of what they do. So...

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: Oh, great...

23 VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: it is indicated here.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: New York State election
25 law mandates that every SUNY student...

1 VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: Correct...

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: gets sent a voter
3 registration at the beginning of the school year. And
4 during presidential cycles in January or February of
5 that year, that applies to CUNY as well?
6

7 DEPUTY DIRECTOR EMANUEL: Correct.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: Are there other states
9 or municipalities that are doing exciting things that
10 we've been looking at that we could replicate here? I
11 imagine that there are some states, especially this
12 year, where there's really big efforts to register
13 students to vote, and it would be interesting to know
14 what new things are being done there that we could
15 potentially look at.

16 DIRECTOR AHEARN: This isn't, unfortunately, for
17 this election, because it would require state, uh,
18 state law to be passed. But states with the highest
19 youth turnout have reforms like same day registration
20 and automatic registration.

21 New York has done some good work in in expanding
22 voter registration laws in the last few years, after
23 many years of stagnant laws, by reducing the deadline
24 to 10 days, having an online voter portal. But again,
25 to underline something Helen said before, it's really

1
2 the face to face registration that gets forms
3 actually filled out, especially when it's a student
4 talking to another student and saying, here's why I
5 registered and why I think you should do.

6 But those reforms, New York still hasn't done,
7 and it would greatly improve voter turnout among
8 students who may show up to the poll site, and
9 unfortunately not registered. Unless it's the first
10 day of early voting, and then they can still register
11 and vote on the same day.

12 VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: I think the
13 (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: They do have a lot of
15 work to do here in New York. And, uh, same day
16 registration things like that, it would be exciting
17 to partner together with you as we pursue those.

18 VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: The other thing I was
19 going to add is that the All In campaign, because it
20 was a competition when it began, uh, it generated a
21 lot of unique kinds of ideas that may have been
22 local, but they certainly have opportunity for being
23 generalized to other places. So, that might be a
24 place we can look as well. So, you have a good cadre
25 of things.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I heard the word
3 competition, and I like...

4 VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: Yeah!

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: it was actually a former
6 college professor of mine who suggested that having
7 voter registration competitions... And he mentioned,
8 I mean, I'm not sure this is the panel that can
9 answer, but he said there were some legal hurdles to
10 go through when having a competition to register to
11 most people to vote. And you're nodding your head,
12 this is familiar to you?

13 VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: Mm-hmm.

14 DIRECTOR AHEARN: Yeah. You can't, like, trade
15 off, "if you register, you get this thing", unless
16 it's available to people... anyone who comes to an
17 event, whether or not they register.

18 So you could do something, like, if you register,
19 if you get thrown into a randomized, like, tech rally
20 sorry, not a rally, a raffle, uhm, but it can't be,
21 like, the more you register, the more likely you are
22 to win.

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Well, then our Board of
24 Elections has a problem, because every time you vote,

1
2 they give out a sticker and the pens. So, we're in
3 trouble.

4 (LAUGHTER)

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: But, it would be even... I
6 would suggest even a friendly competition between
7 campuses would probably be okay.

8 DEPUTY DIRECTOR EMANUEL: Chair? Our colleges do
9 competition, Baruch comes to my mind. Every year
10 during their Fall Fest, they used to have a
11 competition around with their clubs, their student
12 clubs, who could register to vote ,you know, the most
13 students. And ,you know, then, there would be some
14 kind of prize, maybe Student Affairs would ,you know,
15 help them with some additional resources for that
16 particular club. But, there have been some ,you know,
17 whether or not you're not supposed to do the
18 competitions or not, it's news to me, but...

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Whoopsie...

20 DEPUTY DIRECTOR EMANUEL: But, there are (LAUGHS)
21 there are some competitions that do go on at some of
22 our campuses.

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: We we've spoken a lot about
24 voter registration and voter participation, which is
25 sort of the baseline, I think, of engaging people in

1
2 our in our electorate, of course. And in the Council,
3 one of the ways that every council member engages
4 with their community, is through community boards.
5 These are... They deal with issues -- they're
6 advisory -- and they deal with issues such as, like,
7 land use, which is huge in New York City. And we help
8 appoint members of those committees. So we're very...
9 we work very closely with our community boards in
10 general.

11 And I'm wondering if CUNY, through their civic
12 engagement, has any efforts to work with their local
13 community boards, much like we do, much like local
14 elected officials do?

15 DEPUTY DIRECTOR EMANUEL: No, not to my knowledge.
16 You notice I'm checking resources...

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: (LAUGHS) Yeah, well it
18 seems to me, one of the basic ways that people can
19 engage in, whether it's issue oriented or in their
20 neighborhoods, is through engagement with the
21 community boards similar to efforts to provide
22 internships with local elected officials. And as
23 we're looking for ways for students to make an impact
24 on our city and on their community, that seems to me
25 be sort of a very basic one.

1
2 DEPUTY DIRECTOR EMANUEL: Yeah. I know that we do
3 provide that information through social media
4 whenever the applications are open. We have done that
5 through CUNY Votes. And I know that Helen mentioned
6 the participatory budgeting, right?

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Mm-hmm.

8 DEPUTY DIRECTOR EMANUEL: So, I mean, it's not
9 necessarily through community boards, but that's ,you
10 know, a way for a student to be familiar that
11 community boards exist and are there for a purpose.
12 So...

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, okay, good. Yeah, it
14 seems, it seems that though ,you know, outside of
15 voting and registering, there are a lot of
16 opportunities that are built in that don't take a big
17 stretch. You know, placing a kid in an internship, or
18 a young adult in an internship, is critical, but it's
19 also ,you know, a lot of effort to engage a student
20 in a community board meeting. Because, there's going
21 to be giant development next to Kingsborough
22 Community College, and those are free to attend. You
23 can even attend online. And that seems to be an
24 easier hurdle to overcome. So, I want to thank you,
25 the panel for coming, and all of the help, and the

1 assistance that was provided today. There's certainly
2 a lot of work that CUNY is doing to engage or
3 elector, but there is certainly a lot more that I
4 think could be done to improve it. You know,
5 something as simple as assessing yourselves using
6 metrics and making that metrics those public, so that
7 communities in the public can also provide their
8 input ,you know, engaging with our offices - I don't
9 think anyone would say no to an internship. Gale
10 Brewer never says no to an intern.

12 (LAUGHTER)

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, what you have like 50
14 of them?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Well, when I was borough
16 president, we had 159. And, now, last summer we had
17 40.

18 VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: Wow.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: There ya' go.

20 (LAUGHTER)

21 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: (LAUGHS) Gale gets all the
22 interns. But ,you know, through the metrics, through
23 posting it publicly ,you know, the internships
24 engaging with local organizations that already exist,
25 and I think what sounds to me like a need to do more

1
2 systematic efforts to do mail-in ballots. There are
3 lots room for growth in a system that is already
4 clearly important to CUNY. Right? Improving civic
5 engagement, and really making the CUNY system ,you
6 know, a voting powerhouse. Because, we're facing a
7 lot challenges when it comes to CUNY - funding for
8 example. And I think it would be really powerful for
9 CUNY as a system to say, these are ,you know, our
10 students are coming out in droves and voting. And
11 from the perspective of students, really making their
12 voices heard, and really showing that it's time for
13 elected officials to start listening to then a little
14 more.

15 I want to thank you all for coming and for the
16 work you're doing.

17 PANEL: Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And congratulations to Ms.
19 Nasser's parents.

20 (LAUGHTER)

21 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: We will call the next panel
22 in a moment.

23 (APPLAUSE)

24 (PAUSE)

25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: We will now call our first
3 public panel. I remind members of the public that
4 this is a formal government proceeding and that
5 decorum shall be observed at all times. As such,
6 members of the public shall remain silent at all
7 times.

8 The witness table is reserved for people who wish
9 to testify. No video recording or photography is
10 allowed from the witness table.

11 Further, members of the public may not present
12 audio or video recordings as testimony, but may
13 submit transcripts of such recordings to the Sergeant
14 at Arms for inclusion in the hearing record.

15 If you wish to speak at today's hearing, please
16 fill out an appearance card with the Sergeant at Arms
17 and wait to be recognized. When recognized, you will
18 have three minutes to speak on today's hearing topic:
19 *(Increasing) Engaging CUNY Students in Voting and*
20 *Civic Activities.*

21 If you have a written statement or additional
22 written testimony you wish to submit for the record,
23 please provide a copy of that testimony to the
24 Sergeant at Arms.

1
2 I will now call the first panel: Alexis Ramirez,
3 Akkeem Polack, Salimatou Doumbouya, and Tahisha
4 Fields.

5 And prior to your testimony, please state your
6 name for the record.

7 AKKEEM POLACK: Akkeem Polack.

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you, you may begin.

9 AKKEEM POLACK: I'm going first? Greetings,
10 members of the Committee, I am Akkeem from York
11 College in Queens. It's a CUNY school, of course. And
12 today, my testimony will be surrounding our topic:
13 *Engaging CUNY Students in Voting and Civic*
14 *Activities.*

15 You know, just being here, I heard from the
16 previous panel of the CUNY administrators, and, you
17 know, it just.. it just alarmed me. A lot of the
18 times we have these, you know, programs, these civic
19 programs, that we create to kind of promote this kind
20 of activity, but in cases of students like me, we
21 don't know about it. You know? And that is one of the
22 biggest issues, communication.

23 Additionally, I wanted to touch on the fact that
24 these civic education programs sometimes are just
25 limited to come and register to vote. These students

1 don't know what they're voting for. They have no idea
2 who is even running, and believe me, there are
3 students who they only know this because of these
4 memes going around with these memes going with the
5 debate and all of that. You know, that's when they
6 really got in tune into what's happening.
7

8 But even leading up to it, they have no idea.
9 They have no idea on how these... where these
10 politicians where they stand, their policy
11 objectives, all of that. It's just not there. They
12 just don't know.

13 And sometimes it feels like these registration
14 efforts are just, "Just go vote". But, there's no
15 idea about, you know, what am I voting for? And I
16 feel like civic education is needed in that case.

17 Additionally, I'm a part of the university
18 student senate, and one of our key objectives this
19 year has to do with removing the barriers of
20 transportation for CUNY students. We're supporting
21 free MetroCards for all CUNY students. And I realized
22 that I could tie this into voting, because we want to
23 have more civic education programs. You could hear,
24 for example, Macaulay Honors College is offering
25 these programs, but how does a York student get

1
2 there? You know, it's a lot of money to pay for that
3 If you don't qualify, for one of the ASAP or ACE
4 programs. And it's important to especially know to
5 start that free MetroCards thing for community
6 students.

7 The Department of Transportation has it on their
8 website. In 2020, 10 transit companies or agencies
9 across the entire United States gave same day free
10 riding or transportation to vote in areas. And then
11 I'm like, it's the same way. No, you need to give
12 students that same day access, but that same day
13 access needs to be every day if you really want them
14 a part of the civic and the entire voting process.
15 Because even after voting, you know, being engaged in
16 community activities (TIMER CHIMES) you spoke about
17 community boards and all of that.

18 So, really, free MetroCards, and we're hoping
19 that that will help with helping with the voting.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

21 SALIMATOU DOUMBOUYA: Chair Dinowitz, members of
22 the Council, thank you for this opportunity to
23 testify.

24 So, here we are, the...
25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: One moment, can you just
3 say your name for the record, please?

4 SALIMATOU DOUMBOUYA: Salimatou Doumbouya.

5 Here we are, the students that everybody talks
6 about. Again, my name is Salimatou Doumbouya, and I
7 am a student at the New York City College of
8 Technology, studying architecture. I'm now in my
9 fifth year, and with the minor in business
10 management.

11 I am also the chairperson of the CUNY
12 University's student senate and the CUNY student
13 trustee. And I have been in this position for three
14 years now.

15 I remember when I was first running a student
16 telling me, why would elected officials even listen
17 to you ever? You're not even from here, you're from
18 Guinea. And I told her, well, as the Chair of USS,
19 you're not necessarily representing yourself. You're
20 representing the entire CUNY student community, like
21 275,000 students, and so many of them have a stake,
22 so many of them have a right to vote. So, as an
23 influencer, we have a lot of power. And that's what
24 the university student senate represents.

1
2 For me, logically, tangibly on paper everywhere,
3 it's the single centralized institution of CUNY that
4 engages every institution -- all of the 25 campuses.
5 Our constituency, our membership, has students from
6 all campuses around four, sometimes six students that
7 come to represent their constituencies on the
8 university of student Senate, and we get engaged.

9 For us, civic engagement does not start months
10 before or during a year, it's not a specific time, it
11 is all the time.

12 The students that come into USS sometimes are
13 only aware of what's happening on their campuses, and
14 they want to make an impact. Then they come into USS
15 and realize, hey, listen, there is so much more going
16 on, we should go testify at the city council, we
17 should go to the state legislature. Do we have an
18 opportunity to go to D.C. to advocate for our
19 international students? We should actually do it.

20 The university student senate opens doors, it
21 opens up the perspectives, and it opens up
22 possibilities for students. It is a student founded,
23 student funded, organization where students make
24 their own decisions on what they support and how they
25 support it -- Firsthand, experiential learning on

1
2 what policy is, on what running a campaign is because
3 you have to run your campaign to get elected.

4 I run three of those, and I won three of them.

5 And we are about to have other elections where
6 students are learning the process. There are so many
7 people in New York City and New York State politics
8 today that went through USS. Everywhere we go with
9 our scarfs and with our logo, we are being
10 recognized.

11 Some students that come in USS and cannot stay
12 for more than one semester end up joining their
13 community board, because they got a taste of how much
14 impact they can make. And because it is our space,
15 and because we control what happens in there, we get
16 to experience what we want government to be like. And
17 that is the beauty (TIMER CHIMES) of the university
18 student senate.

19 This year, we are operating under the motto of
20 One Voice. The power of one voice. That bleeds into
21 our free MetroCards campaign and everything else that
22 we're doing.

23 So our students want to vote. Our students will
24 get out to vote, and they will encourage their peers
25 to vote because they get to experience it. Nobody

1 tells them, they see it. Because USS is your mini
2 United Nations. It's your mini government where you
3 become more than just a student, you become a part of
4 the making of our great city and state.
5

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

7 TAHISHA FIELDS: Hello, my name is Tahisha Fields,
8 and I've been newly elected to USS. I am the new
9 president of Graduate Student Assembly in Baruch, and
10 I am a graduate student. So my perspective for
11 graduate students is very unique, because I'm an
12 older graduate student, but a graduate student
13 nonetheless.

14 There are still some students that are not
15 civically engaged, because they don't have the
16 knowledge of what's going on with policies. I think
17 because politics is not formed in a way that can be
18 digestible for them.

19 I feel like when a student-led governments, like
20 the one that I'm leading and the one I'm in with USS,
21 it allows students to understand that just because
22 you may not have the knowledge of what's going on,
23 you can take your voice and be allowed into anything
24 that you advocate for.
25

1
2 I think people, mostly students, are not aware
3 that you don't have to have full knowledge policy to
4 be in advocacy.

5 I know that on Baruch we have different kinds of
6 policies that are going on, but going in the retreat
7 for USS made it more of a bigger scope for me.

8 What I can say about the policies of getting more
9 students to be more engaged in voting, it's more
10 about making it more digestible and more relatable to
11 what their needs are in their current state of mind.

12 They do see that a lot of things that are going
13 on is more of, I can't say it, but, of course, I'm an
14 older student, but some of the younger students want
15 things that are more tangible for them.

16 And I think when you're allowed the
17 intersectionality of both the older generation and
18 the younger generation to understand that all our
19 needs are the same, it allows more student
20 engagement.

21 The other issue that I want to talk about is free
22 MetroCards. Yes, uh, being an older student has been
23 a little bit of struggle for me. I am in a fulltime
24 mental health counseling program, and I do commute.
25 All CUNY students are commuters, and they are coming

1
2 from their homes, their several jobs, and it can be a
3 little expensive.

4 I feel like if there is a way to alleviate that
5 stress, it allows students to be more mindful of
6 what's going on in their classes, than worrying about
7 what bills would have to be tightened in order to get
8 MetroCard.

9 So I feel like being in student advocacy and
10 allowing more (INAUDIBLE) for students to be engaged
11 and allowing them to register the vote will make it
12 more access for students in all 25 CUNYs. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

14 ALEXIS RAMIREZ: Dear honorable council members,
15 my name is Alexis Ramirez, and I would like to thank
16 you all for having me here and giving me the
17 opportunity to speak.

18 I represent a diverse and robust campus not too
19 far from here in the heart of Tribeca. I am a senator
20 for The Borough of Manhattan Community College, and I
21 also serve as a delegate from the University student
22 senate. And I know my colleagues have touched on the
23 subject, but we as a body have broken strides to
24 encourage our fellow students to be active
25

1
2 participants in our civilized society, to be active
3 members in our democracy.

4 And in the spirit of community, camaraderie, and
5 representation, I think we are here to declare our
6 commitment to ensuring and fostering student civic
7 engagement and ensuring that we have the resources
8 necessary to register as many people to vote as we
9 can.

10 And I know wholeheartedly that as a body and as a
11 school community, we have done our part, but I know
12 that more is possible. And I know that organizations
13 like NYPIRG and Help America Vote have broken strides
14 and broken the glass ceiling to ensure that we as
15 students are heard.

16 And I think we're doing our part now in ensuring
17 our fellow peers are having their voices heard by
18 speaking to our elected officials. And in these
19 unprecedented and obscure times, I ask my elected
20 officials to encourage my fellow peers to unleash and
21 yield the power that each and every one of us
22 possesses. What power you may ask? The power to
23 choose. But with such power, comes great
24 responsibility and the resources needed to tackle
25 that responsibility.

1
2 A lot of our organizations are woefully
3 underfunded and understaffed and require more
4 resources by our elected officials. A lot of these
5 resources are tackling tough hours, are tackling, you
6 know, the inability to hire new people and to get
7 more people to volunteer, and it's causing a lack in
8 our ability to be heard as a student and as a
9 demographic.

10 Touching on what some of my colleagues have
11 mentioned, part of our plight and our struggle for
12 fairness is the ability to commute. The ability to be
13 able to go off to our campuses without the fear that
14 financial hurdles will get in their way. In a city
15 that's so expensive, in a city where many are facing
16 food insecurity, the right to commuting is a
17 necessity.

18 With that, we encourage our elected officials to
19 champion our beliefs, to champion our cause, to
20 champion the belief that transportation and commute
21 is a right. And with that said, I would also ask my
22 elected officials to champion the belief that access
23 to an education is a right and not a privilege. And
24 with that, champion the belief that the people's
25 university should be free of cost, thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you very much. I
3 mean, first off, I think you representing your
4 student body being in the senate, I think
5 demonstrates your commitment to civic engagement, but
6 also being here testifying publicly at a city council
7 hearing, uh, I think the four of you serve as a model
8 of what good civic engagement can really look like.

9 Have you, anyone can answer this, have any of you
10 been involved in any of the CUNY-led initiatives for
11 civic engagement, some of which we heard about from
12 CUNY staff at today's hearing? Yeah, go ahead?

13 ALEXIS RAMIREZ: I'm actually a BMCC ambassador
14 for the organization to Help America Vote, which my
15 responsibilities basically entail, you know, going
16 around campus with the clipboard, asking students to
17 register to vote, and educating them on their rights,
18 educating them on the process itself. And that's
19 mostly what I've been doing. Again, that organization
20 is unfortunately, understaffed and in need of more of
21 more people. But the problem that I, firsthand, that
22 I have seen is that a lot of students aren't really
23 willing to engage with us. They kind of just maybe
24 hear us out for the two minutes that we speak to
25 them, and it kinda goes over their heads.

1
2 So we would have to, you know, insist on them
3 filling out a form or encouraging them to vote.

4 But I've seen that there's a lack of interest in,
5 unfortunately, my peers and my generation for this
6 willingness to vote that older generations have taken
7 advantage of.

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Are there things, let's say
9 for that example, CUNY could be doing more
10 effectively? For example, you mentioned
11 understaffing, which sounds like funding. So funding
12 greater, training perhaps or any of these things...
13 Would any of these things be helpful in your work
14 that you work with at CUNY?

15 ALEXIS RAMIREZ: I don't necessarily think that
16 training is the issue. I do believe that the scarce
17 resources are, because I know that there is a
18 commitment within my school's administration and
19 within the people I worked with to ensure our
20 students to vote and register. I just think that, you
21 know, the lack of resources and maybe the, you know,
22 a lot of these volunteers are juggling work
23 schedules, you know, class schedules,
24 extracurriculars. So it does become overbearing. So
25 believe if maybe there are additional resources sort

1
2 of alleviate that overburden, I think that would go
3 and create great progress.

4 SALIMATOU DOUMBOUYA: If I may also, I think that
5 CUNY can do better in collaborating with the student
6 governments and the campus wide student organizations
7 like USS. I think that students need to be met where
8 they are and students need to be spoken to in the
9 language that they understand. And sometimes we just
10 understand each other better. So I think more
11 formalized partnerships, more formalized
12 collaborations, and recognition of everybody's
13 strength may be a direction towards more progress.

14 AKKEEM POLACK: And, you know, Chair, you
15 mentioned it earlier when you suggested that, like,
16 why isn't this a part of, like, curriculum? You know?

17 And I think that's the direction to go as well,
18 because no matter what course you do, you know, it
19 involves politics. It involves policies. It involves
20 various laws and all of that. So it would be good to
21 have that in there, not with people with an agenda
22 though, but just to educate.

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, I mean, you mentioned
24 curriculum, which leads me to, you know, the
25 professors, have you been seeing, you know, besides

1
2 those political science classes, are you seeing in
3 your classrooms at all any sort of effort to
4 integrate civic engagement with various topics?

5 SALIMATOU DOUMBOUYA: If I may, I'm an
6 architectural major, and that sounds like the most
7 unconventional thing you could do sitting here. But I
8 actually have been observing it, and I have been
9 watching some of my professors be more open to it
10 than others.

11 In this major where you get the opportunity to be
12 creative, to set things up, and to put your ideas on
13 to paper, and in to different types of things, I have
14 faced situations where my question is, how do you do
15 social development? How do you promote political
16 shift with architecture?

17 And my professors have been open to these ideas.
18 So from my perspective, it is important that when
19 students come up with these creative ways to do
20 things, that professors are open and also that they
21 find the ability to adapt to it.

22 Some of us want to be super technical, some of us
23 want to be very philosophical before they can be
24 technical, and it also helps them in their
25 development. That's what I find in my major.

1
2 TAHISHA FIELDS: I can say in my major, we engage
3 a lot, because it's Mental Health Counseling, and we
4 make it more broad, but we also bring it in of the
5 psychology part and people's mind and well-being of
6 it.

7 We know when it comes to political advocacy and
8 differences, it can be a little bit tense with what
9 you believe. I think getting to a point where people
10 understand that whatever side that you're on, you
11 can have your beliefs and be respectful and still be
12 able to debate and understand what you're doing.

13 I think there's parts that people don't know how
14 to express their... what it is about politics, and it
15 can be a little confusing sometimes. And I think when
16 it's in a way that whatever is that you believe that
17 can be your own core value, it is what you are, but
18 also be able to know that differences do matter. But
19 in a very resourceful way, because people will have
20 discourse, but it's okay to have a little discourse,
21 but be respectful in it.

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

23 And, lastly, I know, Alexis, you're actually
24 involved with CUNY and registering people, but for
25 the other three on the panel, have you seen some of

1
2 the voter registration and engagement efforts on your
3 campus, things that were testified to today? Have you
4 personally seen those?

5 AKKEEM POLACK: Yes. So, at York, we all,
6 especially when it comes closer to the elections,
7 they set up polling booths, and you have people you
8 can talk to register to vote and all of those things.
9 So, they're very they're very effective in that. You
10 know, you have signage everywhere. But, again,
11 students end up not doing it, because they just don't
12 know you know... they really just don't understand
13 the entire process, you know? And I think that's the
14 problem.

15 TAHISHA FIELDS: For Baruch, they have their clubs
16 that are doing, and they have their little
17 competitions. I know USG (Undergraduate Student
18 Government) and GSA (Graduate Student Assembly) they
19 are doing a big thing, they do it every election
20 year. So there are different opportunities on our
21 campus for voter registration and voter engagement.

22 I think it's more about making sure if they are
23 registered to make sure they actually are voting.

24 So they aren't allowing it to do on Baruch on
25 this campus, but I think they're trying to speak to

1
2 them like, yes, you are registered, but make sure
3 this is a time that you need to go and vote. So
4 that's what's happening on my campus.

5 SALIMATOU DOUMBOUYA: From the USS perspective, we
6 hold Get Out the Vote rallies. We host tableings on
7 different campuses, and we also offer monetary and
8 non-monetary sponsorships and co-sponsorship to
9 different clubs and organizations that want to engage
10 in these activities. And we also work with CUNY Votes
11 from time to time.

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I want to thank the four of
13 you for coming to testify today, for the work you do
14 at CUNY, and, for, again, demonstrating what good
15 civic engagement can look like.

16 I will call the next panel in a moment.

17 (PAUSE)

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, our next panel will
19 be Sharon Brown, John Morales, and Junior Andrews.

20 Okay, you may begin when ready, and please state
21 your name for the record.

22 JUNIOR E. ANDREWS: Good morning, everyone.

23 My name is Junior E. Andrews, I'm a student at
24 Medgar Evers College at Crown Heights, and I'm also
25 part of the USS student senate.

1 Sorry, I was a little too late, so let me just
2
3 get my nerves in check.

4 (LAUGHTER)

5 JUNIOR E. ANDREWS: Alright.

6 So my reason for coming today is basically, it's
7 a topic that has been on my mind for a while where
8 students are concerned, food insecurity. It has to do
9 a higher education, because a lot of students in the
10 college has EBT cards, but we can't use it on the
11 campus itself to purchase meals.

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I just want to remind you
13 that this is a hearing on civic engagement at CUNY.

14 JUNIOR E. ANDREWS: Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay.

16 JUNIOR E. ANDREWS: Yeah, but part of the reason I
17 brought that up is because part of... if you're not
18 able to eat, you can't physically engage in much
19 things.

20 And it's part of the higher education process
21 that a student must be able to have food, to engage
22 in anything in campuses or anything citywide.

23 So one of the things of civil engagement that
24 will happen in this school, we having voter
25 registration tomorrow, and that is part of the drive

1
2 of connecting hunger with voting for kids to
3 attention, if they don't have that capacity to buy
4 food, they're not engaged. And if they're not
5 engaged, they're not feeling responsibility to come
6 vote for anybody, or to have any kind of civil
7 engagements in the day to day activities.

8 So my...

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: (NO MIC) (INAUDIBLE)

10 JUNIOR E. ANDREWS: Thank you.

11 So my contribution to this hearing basically is
12 to link both civic engagement with the hunger
13 situation and college campuses around New York City.

14 So if the students are not able to concentrate
15 and focus on things that from a perspective of having
16 nutrition, civic engagement is a waste of time. They
17 will not come out and vote. They will not be engaged.

18 Because in order for us to get them to register
19 to vote, we have to have some type of food or
20 something to convince them to come to register, and
21 then think he should think about voting.

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

23 Please say your name for the record.

24 JOHN MORALES: Hello, can you hear me?
25

1
2 So, my name is John Morales, I am a student
3 president at LaGuardia Community College, and I came
4 here to testify.

5 Well, I'd like to speak a little bit about my own
6 background. So I am an immigrant from Ecuador, I came
7 here for asylum, and currently, I am not able to take
8 FAFSA, which is federal student aid, because I am not
9 a citizen. Uh, thanks to the José Peralta Act, I am
10 able to take TAP, which is a tuition assistance
11 program for the state, which covers for my tuition.

12 Now, as an immigrant, I really can't vote, and it
13 is... I want to bring up a lot of opportunities that
14 I would like that I was able to take in government
15 both in the country and at LaGuardia.

16 My dad actually worked for the government, uh, a
17 government department in my home country, which is
18 why I am inspired to take on government, and I would
19 like to work in government in the future. However,
20 there are been some opportunities that I wasn't able
21 to take since I am not a citizen, and that has
22 hindered my ability to get more involved in
23 government. At one point, I actually got accepted for
24 a position as an assistant for a congress member, but
25 the day I showed up at the office, they told me they

1
2 couldn't do anything because apparently, they
3 somebody wasn't looking, and they didn't know they
4 couldn't give me the job. And that was after I
5 already went there, and I was in the office.

6 I believe in my own way, I would like to inspire
7 as much changes as I can. One of the issues that not
8 necessarily (INAUDIBLE) civic engagement, but that is
9 very important to both USS and CUNY is MetroCards.
10 Now, since I have the TAP aid, which helps me for my
11 tuition, I chose my LaGuardia because of its
12 affordability, but also because well, it has my
13 major, and affordability, but it's not a convenient
14 location. It is very far from my house, I live Howard
15 Beach. It is really far from Long Island City, which
16 is more or less where LaGuardia is located. And
17 transportation is something I have to access a lot
18 every single day. It is more or less two trips going
19 in and going back. And it's more or less five days a
20 week that I have to go there, adding on different
21 meetings for SGA, which is student government, and
22 for USS, which is why I believe either free
23 MetroCards or some alternative could be very useful
24 for me.

1
2 There's an alternative called ASAP, but it is
3 inconvenient for me, because it also has some
4 eligibility requirements like taking on extra
5 courses. I am an engineering major, and I have an
6 academically challenging course load at the moment. I
7 don't think I can afford taking any more classes that
8 would that they would require of me.

9 That is my experience, (TIMER CHIMES) and that is
10 what I want to say. I wanted to share about my own
11 experience first and why I couldn't be that involved
12 even though I want to be.

13 SHARON BROWN: Hello, my name is Sharon Brown.

14 Okay, for higher education civic engagement, I
15 believe that the schools and the City Council, City
16 Hall, should incorporate freedom of religion as far
17 as people defending the freedom of religion in
18 school, because this will help out the problems that
19 they're having in school, the shootings, the
20 different atmosphere that's going on. The reason why
21 we have those things is because no one did their
22 civic engagement concerning when prayer was taken out
23 of school. We need it back in. We need the praise
24 and worship bible. We need the chorus. As those
25 things came out of school, you started to see more

1
2 problems. You started to see more crime. You started
3 to see more shootings over the years.

4 So when I was in school, I registered people to
5 vote, and I also was trying to get them to make sure
6 they didn't remove prayer. I had seen in the '93 that
7 we were headed towards major problems in school if
8 they took out the religious portion, the freedom of
9 religion. No one did their civic engagement to fight
10 for freedom of religion. And this is why we're
11 dealing with what we're dealing with now.

12 So when in '93, when I was trying to get people
13 to put prayer back in, the Bible back in, the 10
14 commandments, everything, Jewish and Christian,
15 Christian, uh, Christmas Carols, manger scenes...
16 Even here, we should have manger scenes bible on-site
17 during the holidays and things. Because those civic
18 engagements are lacking, we are experiencing
19 shootings and things. They have drag shows in school.
20 This is direct conflict with all the things that I've
21 just listed. If we had those things in there, we
22 wouldn't have pornographic books and materials in
23 school. We wouldn't have school shootings. We
24 wouldn't have the major problems that we're having.

1
2 So we need people to stand up for freedom of
3 religion. This is something that people don't know
4 that it's really connected to your civil rights, your
5 civic engagement, but the law basically comes from
6 the bible the 10 commandments, Louisiana, I believe,
7 or two states have decided they're going to put the
8 10 commandments in school. I had the argument that
9 the 10 commandments is based on the bible. So if we
10 take the Bible out of school, we're essentially
11 taking out law and order, and then we get school
12 shootings, pornographic materials. We get all kinds
13 of things that the Bible prohibits.

14 So if you see the bible prohibits it, (TIMER
15 CHIMES) it happens when you take the bible out of
16 school.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much for your
18 testimony.

19 We also have Isabel Torres, thank you. Would you
20 also please state your name for the record?

21 ISABEL TORRES: Hello? Okay, hi, yes, I'm Isabel
22 Torres. Do I just continue with my testimony?

23 So I'm Isabel Torres, I'm a sophomore at
24 Queensborough Community College, and I'm also a new
25 delegate for the university student senate.

1
2 So I just want to speak on a little bit of my
3 experience. This spring, I was a fulltime student,
4 and I was a part of my school's outdoor track team,
5 as well as involved in student government. And at the
6 same time, I had an internship through CUNY Spring
7 Forward, and I worked two part time jobs. So just try
8 to imagine my schedule is very hectic. But I'm not
9 the only CUNY student that has that experience. And
10 CUNY is comprised of hustlers, individuals simply
11 trying to get an education.

12 At the time, a resource that I was grateful to
13 have was a free MetroCard provided by ASAP. And it
14 was one less financial worry on my plate, and was the
15 reason why I was so successful last semester.

16 Because of this free MetroCard, I didn't hesitate
17 to take an internship in Manhattan, nor did I
18 hesitate to join the track team which met five times
19 a week. I didn't have to worry about the financial
20 burden of my commute to class. And most importantly,
21 I did not hesitate to come here today - to come here
22 and speak today.

23 By providing free MetroCards for all CUNY
24 students, you'd allow us to have access to all of the
25

1
2 opportunities that are available to us without the
3 financial barrier of transportation.

4 That's why it's crucial for students to vote,
5 because things like free MetroCards are on the ballot
6 this year. Free MetroCards would ensure CUNY
7 students have access to their polling locations,
8 removing transportation costs as a barrier to voting.

9 This also promotes equity giving all students the
10 same opportunity to participate in elections,
11 ensuring fair representation and greater civic
12 engagement amongst all students.

13 That was my testimony, but I also want to speak a
14 little more on what I heard today and just to give my
15 insight.

16 I'm also Student Government Association President
17 at Queensborough. So, you had asked a previous panel
18 what we have seen on campus. And last week, we had,
19 like, last Wednesday, we had a table where we were
20 giving out free snacks. And something that I'm just
21 noticing is that students aren't educated enough on
22 what's going on now. Like, education is the biggest,
23 I guess, barrier. Why are students going register to
24 vote for something that you don't know what they're
25

1
2 voting on. They're not aware. And I feel like that
3 starts in class.

4 Like, we had, like, what was mentioned, in a way
5 that I feel like that could get done, rather than
6 having a class... because, I'm a business
7 administration student, I'm not really gonna pay to
8 have, like, a class that falls under political
9 science. Right? It's thinking logically.

10 A course, that was very important to me my
11 freshman year was like a freshman intro class or
12 First Year Student Success. (TIMER CHIMES) And I feel
13 like a great way to promote education... Sorry, I'm
14 running out of time... but, a great way to promote
15 civic engagement, and just voter education in
16 general, would be through classes like that. Because,
17 it's reaching the new students, it's reaching the
18 freshman students. So I feel like that's a great way
19 to start.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you, thank you so
21 much.

22 Uh, the three of you who are involved in CUNY,
23 have you been personally, if you could talk a little
24 more maybe, but personally involved with any of the
25 CUNY-led activities in addition to maybe the table

1
2 you did, but things that are spearheaded by the CUNY
3 faculty? Any other involvement you want to talk
4 about?

5 JUNIOR E ANDREWS: Personally, myself, no. I would
6 like to be part of if it's on the table, definitely.
7 The closest (INAUDIBLE) I've seen is basically what
8 happens on the campus or when we go to USS meeting,
9 we talk about stuff concerning CUNY. But in terms of
10 the broader prospect of it, I don't see it.

11 And, secondly, I would like to just echo
12 sentiments on the MetroCards -- free metro card. One
13 of the things that is happening on the campus right
14 now, uh, freshmen are coming in, but by sophomore,
15 they drop out. So the retaining rate is low, because
16 of two reasons: transportation and food insecurity.

17 And so far, the USS has done an excellent job,
18 (INAUDIBLE), through I believe USS, who has pushed
19 the initiative of free Metrocards.

20 But in terms of CUNY itself, I think CUNY itself
21 as an educated body has not invested enough in the
22 urban schools and in a project to foster freshman
23 coming in to stay in the different colleges.

24

25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Well, Mr. Andrews, I will
3 tell you two things: one, it's very clear that USS
4 has their talking points very clear.

5 (LAUGHTER)

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: (LAUGHS) Made everyone
7 repeat, MetroCards, MetroCards, MetroCards, uhm, but
8 in your case in particular, you'd like to be more
9 involved. We still have a couple of CUNY
10 administrators here and NYPIRG here, uhm, and I am
11 sure they would be more than happy to speak with you,
12 uh, after today's hearing.

13 JUNIOR E ANDREWS: Thank you. (LAUGHS)

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: All right. Uh, I want to
15 thank this panel, uh, Oh, I'm sorry, Council Member
16 Brewer has some questions.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I just... On the EBT
18 cards, just so you know, that's 100 percent federal,
19 so that would be an example where advocating would
20 not cost the city or the state anything. So, to me,
21 that would be something that you should be able to
22 get.

23 Now, MetroCard costs city and state. So, that's a
24 different story. We've heard it before. I completely
25 understand the need for it. But, EBT, nothing. So, I

1
2 would suggest that that would be something that you
3 guys might want to take up as an issue, because it
4 might happen quickly.

5 JUNIOR E ANDREWS: Thank you, Council Member. I
6 have started pushing the movement on this in a couple
7 of different ways. A couple of days ago, I was in
8 D.C. for the Black Congressional Caucus, and I had
9 the opportunity to speak to Representative
10 Cunningham, uh, and a couple of other people from
11 NAACP. I also had the opportunity to speak to some of
12 the CUNY...

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Right.

14 JUNIOR E ANDREWS: chancellors at the retreat.

15 One of the things that I am noticing is that a
16 lot people underestimate the power and the security
17 EBT gives to a lot of single mothers who go to
18 college. Kids who come from homes that are
19 disadvantaged...

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Right, we know all that.
21 What I'm saying is, I'm, like, endgame.

22 JUNIOR E ANDREWS: Yes, endgame, EBT is easy to
23 fix. And I will hope the Council pushed to fix it.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I know, but I can tell
25 you, you have to figure out how to get there...

1
2 JUNIOR E ANDREWS: Mm-hmm

3 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And, that would be
4 question, since it doesn't cost the city or the state
5 anything, because EBT doesn't, then it would be worth
6 looking to see exactly how you could do it. Because,
7 I think it could happen. I mean, we know the need for
8 it, that's not the issue. The issue is the process to
9 get to it. Maybe IBO (The Independent Budget Office),
10 I would ask them to do a study. Try to get some
11 outside support, not just you guys...

12 JUNIOR E ANDREWS: Yes.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: for doing it.

14 JUNIOR E ANDREWS: Thank you.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: If you need help, let me
16 know, I'm good at that.

17 JUNIOR E ANDREWS: I will definitely tap you.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, thank you. This
19 panel...

20 SHARON BROWN: Can you just say something?

21 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I'm sorry, testimony is
22 closed for this panel.

23 We will be calling our next panel on Zoom in a
24 moment.

25

(PAUSE)

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, this concludes the in person portion of our public testimony. We will now move to remote testimony. If you are testifying remotely, please listen for your name to be called. Once your name is called, a member of our staff will unmute you. You may then start your testimony once the Sergeant at Arms sets the clock and cues you to begin.

So, we have two people on this panel Khin Mai Aung, you may begin once you are unmuted and the sergeant cues you.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR KHIN MAI AUNG: Great, thank you very much. Can you hear me?

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yes.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR KHIN MAI AUNG: Perfect. Uh, thank you very much for this opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of Generation Citizen to the New York City Council Higher Education Committee.

First of all, I very much enjoyed the presentations of the students just now.

I'm Khin Mai Aung, I'm the Mid Atlantic Executive Director of Generation Citizen. Via our community

1 based civics education secondary students apply
2 social studies learning to the real world by studying
3 and advocating on an issues of importance in their
4 communities.
5

6 First and foremost, we're thankful to the City
7 Council for its \$500,000 investment this year in our
8 programming in youth civics education, student civics
9 education, and New York City Schools Initiative,
10 which we have been fortunate to receive since 2017.

11 Today, I'm thrilled to testify about our voter
12 education engagement and registration activities in
13 New York City, during this important election year,
14 to inform this hearing on engaging students at the
15 CUNY campuses in voting and civic activities.

16 Many of our students in high school, enroll in
17 CUNY upon graduation, and some are already taking
18 early college classes at CUNY campuses as a result of
19 early college enrollment programs.

20 Through Generation Citizen, RISE vote program,
21 that's an acronym that stands for registering,
22 informing, supporting, and empowering. Vote (LOST
23 CONNECTION) (INAUDIBLE) 2023 voter activation
24 campaign, we created tool kits and resources for
25 teachers in 11th and 12th grade classrooms across the

1 city in public schools to inform, educate, and
2 register 17 and 18-year-old students who will be
3 eligible to vote in November of 2024 for this
4 important election.
5

6 Building on our work this spring and high school
7 classrooms, we're rolling out a toolkit through our
8 fall professional development programs as well as
9 dedicated trainings. In particular, we're targeting
10 23 New York City public high schools... I'm sorry,
11 New York City public high schools as well as engaging
12 seven high schools in the Bronx, selected because the
13 Bronx has lower voter registration rates for 18-year-
14 olds at 18.6 percent relative to New York City's or
15 other boroughs with resources to run additional
16 school based education and registration events.

17 We would love to work more closely with both CUNY
18 and the City Council to a expand the reach of our
19 resources this spring leading up to the election the
20 next month and a half.

21 Generation Citizen, again, is incredibly thankful
22 for the City Council's renewed funding each year
23 despite myriad challenges and budgetary concerns in
24 the last year. And we hope to continue partnering
25 with the Council and CUNY to continue bringing the

1
2 high quality civics education as well as voter
3 education and engagement to our City schools and to
4 CUNY. Thank you for considering my testimony.

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you for your
6 testimony, and thank you for your work in focusing on
7 the Bronx. Which, as you pointed out, needs a little
8 more targeting when it comes to voter engagement and
9 voter registration. So, I appreciate that work.

10 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR KHIN MAI AUNG: Happy to do it.

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

12 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR KHIN MAI AUNG: Happy to do it,
13 thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: The following witness is
15 also signed up to testify remotely, Peter Theadore
16 (INAUDIBLE)? If you are here, please raise your
17 hand.

18 If there is anyone else present in the room who
19 has not had the opportunity to testify but wishes to
20 do so, please raise your hand.

21 Thank you, and thank you for attending today's
22 hearing on *Engaging CUNY Students in Voting and Civic*
23 *Activities*.

24 You know, we say this year's a really important
25 election year, but really every single election is a

1 critical election year. A lot of the rules that
2 govern CUNY is administered by the State. A lot of
3 their funding, but the City. And a lot of the issues
4 that direct our entire nation are national. There is
5 not a single election that is not important. And the
6 work that CUNY does is really critical in ensuring
7 the next generation of leaders are civically engaged
8 in registering to vote, in voting, and in our
9 communities.
10

11 So, I want to thank CUNY for the work their
12 already doing. And I look forward to working with you
13 to ensure that we are engaging more and more of our
14 students in our local neighborhoods.

15 And with that, this hearing is adjourned.

16 (GAVEL SOUND) (GAVELING OUT)
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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 September 24, 2024