

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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December 7, 2017
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HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: DANIEL DROMM
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

- DANIEL R GARODNICK
- MARGARET S. CHIN
- ANTONIO REYNOSO
- VINCENT J. GENTILE
- STEPHEN T. LEVIN
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- MARK LEVINE
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- MARK TREYGER
- YDANIS A. RODRIGUEZ
- HELEN K. ROSENTHAL
- RAFAEL SALAMANCA, JR.

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

Josh Wallack
Deputy Chancellor for Early Childhood Education
And Student Enrollment at the Department of
Education

LaShawn Robinson
Executive Superintendent of the Department of
Education's Office of Equity and Access

Joshua Sidis
Senior Advisor with the Mayor's Office of
Operations

Janella Hinds
Vice President for Academic High Schools for the
Federation of Teachers

Kimberly Quick
Policy Associate at the Century Foundation

Richard Kahlenberg
Senior Fellow at the Century Foundation

Nicole Mader
Senior Research Fellow at the Center for New York
City Affairs

Matthew Gonzales
Director of the School Diversity Project for New
York Appleseed

David Bloomfield
Professor of Education Leadership, Law and Policy
Brooklyn College and the CUNY Graduate Center

Tazin Azad
Parent, Parent Association Member, Title One
Committee Member

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

Hebh Jamal

Director of the Public Relations and Chair of the Race and Enrollment Committee for Integrate NYC, Youth Policy Fellow for the New York Appleseed

Matthew Diaz

Junior in High School and Represents the Resource Allocation Committee for Integrate NYC

Leanne Nunes

Director of Equity, Represents the Representation Committee for Integrate NYC

Aneth Naranjo

Director of Youth Engagement, Represents the Relationships Committee for Integrate NYC

Dekaila Wilson

Student, Director of Decriminalization and Chair Of the Restorative Justice Committee for Integrate NYC

Amina Fofana

District Seven Student, Represents Integrate NYC As Creative Director and Committee Lead Council

Taylor McGraw

Hosts a Podcast called The Bell, Facilitator of Teens Take Charge

Nusi Olumegbon

Senior at the Academy for Young Writers, Represents Black Lives Matter, GSA, Teens Take Charge

Dulce Marquez

Senior at New Heights Academy Charter School and Member of Teens Take Charge

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

Muhammad Deen
Senior at New Heights Academy Charter School,
Member of Teens Take Charge

Jederick Estrella
Senior at Victory Collegiate High School and
Member of Teens Take Charge

Whitney Stephenson
Student and Member of Teens Take Charge

Nelson Luna
Student and Member of Teens Take Charge

Randi Levine
Policy Director for Advocates for Children of New
York

Camillia Brown
Legislative Fellow at the New York Civil
Liberties Union

Melissa Iachan
Senior Staff Attorney at the New York Lawyers for
The Public Interest

Lori Podvesker
Senior Manager of Disability and Education Policy
At Include NYC

Maria Gil
Parent and Member of Make the Road New York

Naomi Pena
Community Education Council President of School
District One in New York City

David Goldsmith
Member and Past Co-chair of the Education Council
Consortium, ECC

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

Lucas Liu
District Three Community Education Council, CEC

Kristen Berger
District Three Community Education Council, CEC

Ayanna Behin
President of the Community Education Council for
District 13 in Brooklyn

Kaira Watts-Bey
Senior at Urban Assembly School for Criminal
Justice High School

Ruth Melo
Chair of the Diversity Learning Committee

Grant Cowles
Senior Policy Associate for Youth Justice at
Citizens Committee for Children

Chanera Pierce
Policy Coordinator for the Fair Housing Justice
Center

Jose Miranda
Representing Fair Play Coalition

Sonia Park
Executive Director of the Diverse Charter Schools
Coalition and Member of the Alliance for School
Integration and Desegregation

Allison Keil
Co-Founder and Co-Director of Community Roots
Charter School

Ari Hershkowitz
Attended Hasidic Yeshivas from Two and a Half
Years of Age till 18 Years of Age

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

Miriam Nunberg

Co-Founder of District 15 Parents for Middle School Equity and Member of The Alliance for School Integration and Desegregation

Antonia Ferraro

Member of Community Education Council District 15
And PTA Co-President at MS 88

Michele Greenberg

Parent Co-Chair of the Diversity Committee at PS 372, The Children's School in Brooklyn

Teresa Yi

Runs a College Readiness Program in Flatbush in Brooklyn

Charisse Smith

Parent of 9th Grader at Medgar Evers Preparatory School in Crown Heights, Brooklyn

Lisa Millsaps

Parent of 6th, 10th, and 12th Graders at Medgar Evers Preparatory School in Crown Heights, Brooklyn

Felicia Alexander

Representing Coalition for Equitable Schools in Brooklyn School District 15

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[gavel]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, good afternoon.

Again, my name is Daniel Dromm, I'm Chair of the Education Committee here in the New York City Council. Today we have been joined by members of the Education Committee and others as well so I'm going to announce them first. We've been joined by Council Member Antonio Reynoso, Council Member Brad Lander, Council Member Mark Treyger, Council Member Alan Maisel, Council Member Margaret Chin, Council Member Rosie Mendez, Council Member Chaim Deutsch, Council Member Rafael Salamanca, Council Member Inez Barron, Council Member Helen Rosenthal, Council Member Debi Rose, Council Member Mark Levine, and, and Public Advocate Letitia James is here and now we've also been joined by Council Member Ritchie Torres. And I think other Council Members will be joining us shortly as well. So, okay good afternoon and welcome to the Education Committee's oversight hearing on diversity in New York City schools. We will also hear testimony today on Intro 1604 sponsored by Council Member Mendez which will I... which I will talk about more shortly after some opening remarks. New York City is one of the world's most diverse cities, but

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2 it is no secret that our schools are some of the most
3 segregated in the country. The overall population of
4 the students in city schools is very diverse.
5 Approximately 41 percent of our students are
6 Hispanic, 23 percent are black, 17 percent are Asian,
7 and 16 percent are white. However, that same
8 diversity is rarely reflected in individual schools
9 so why should we care whether all our schools are
10 diverse or not because students of all races,
11 ethnicities and income levels benefit from attending
12 diverse schools. Racial and economic integration of
13 the schools when implemented properly is one of the
14 few education reforms that is proven to increase the
15 educational achievement and opportunities of children
16 of color and low-income children. Diverse schools are
17 also linked to a host of positive learning outcomes
18 for white students as interaction with classmates of
19 different backgrounds and perspectives enhances
20 critical thinking and problem-solving skills in all
21 students. Diversity in the classroom also improves
22 cross racial understanding and reduces racial
23 prejudice, increases civic engagement and provides
24 other social advantages such as more friendships
25 across racial lines, less stereotyping and higher

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2 levels of cultural confidence, a critical advantage
3 in the multicultural workplace of the future. The
4 bottom line is diversity is essential for high
5 quality schools and effective education. I want to
6 make it clear that when I talk about diversity I mean
7 all forms of diversity including race, ethnicity,
8 gender, socioeconomic status, language, disability,
9 sexual orientation, housing status, and so on. I am
10 also a strong believer that increasing diversity goes
11 beyond just placing diverse students inside a
12 classroom. As this committee and council as a whole
13 has prioritized this session we must also strive for
14 culturally responsive education. It is imperative
15 that our teachers are prepared to respond to the
16 diversity of their students and that all students
17 feel included and valued in their schools. Since the
18 committee's last hearing on this topic in 2014 the
19 Department of Education has made efforts to increase
20 school diversity including announcing a diversity in
21 admissions pilot program in 2015 that has allowed a
22 small number of schools to give admissions priority
23 to low income students, English language learners,
24 students involved in the child welfare system or
25 children who have incarcerated parents. In 2016 the

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2 DOE made some efforts to increase diversity in
3 specialized high schools such as expanding the Dream
4 Program, a free after school program that prepares
5 low income students for the specialized high schools
6 admissions test. More significantly in June 2017, DOE
7 released its diversity in New York City public
8 schools plan which outlines DOE's goals and
9 strategies to increase diversity in schools citywide
10 and includes formation of a school diversity advisory
11 group which will make additional recommendations on a
12 citywide diversity policy. I hope that the advisory
13 group will consider creation of more high demand
14 programs such as dual language, gifted and talented
15 and technology programs as a means to increase
16 diversity. While we applaud the DOE for taking steps
17 to improve school diversity prompted in no small part
18 by the council school diversity accountability act,
19 Local Law 59 enacted in 2015 we are concerned that
20 their diversity plan is not ambitious enough.
21 According to an analysis of the plan by the Center
22 for New York City Affairs DOE's goals to increase the
23 number of racially representative schools and
24 decrease the number of the economically stratified
25 schools are so limited that the goals could be met

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2 simply through demographic shifts that are already
3 underway with little or no effort by DOE. In
4 particular we are concerned that DOE's definition of
5 racially representative schools is too broad. DOE
6 defines a racially representative school as one that
7 has between 50 and 90 percent black and Hispanic
8 students yet most researchers consider schools with a
9 concentration of 90 percent black and Hispanic
10 students to be intensely segregated. Even under this
11 overly broad definition less than 31 percent of
12 schools are currently racially representative. Recent
13 reports suggest that segregation may even be worse in
14 charter schools. Although today's hearing will not be
15 examining charter school segregation it is still very
16 concerning, and we are interested in learning what
17 to, to what extent the DOE is considering the impact
18 of charter schools when moving forward with it's
19 plan. Clearly school diversity is a critical issue
20 and we have a lot to examine today regarding DOE's
21 efforts to increase diversity in New York City public
22 schools. The committee also looks forward to hearing
23 testimony from parents, students, educators,
24 advocates, researchers, unions and others on this
25 issue. As I stated earlier we will also hear

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2 testimony on Intro 1604 today. Intro 1604 would
3 require the Mayor's Office of Operations to ensure
4 that city agencies provide mandatory training to
5 frontline staff members regarding the use of city
6 resident's gender pronouns when interacting with such
7 residents. The bill would also require agencies to
8 amend certain forms to allow city residents to
9 indicate their gender pronouns on such forms or in
10 certain circumstances to provide a separate form to
11 collect such information. The bill would also require
12 city agencies to update databases and computer
13 systems such that gender pronoun information may be
14 retained with the resident's individual file. I would
15 like to remind everyone who wishes to testify today
16 that you must fill out a witness slip which is
17 located on the desk of the Sergeant at Arms near the
18 front of this room. If you wish to testify on Intro
19 1604 please indicate on the witness slip whether you
20 are here to testify in favor of or in opposition to
21 the bill. I also want to point out that we will not
22 be voting on Intro 1604 today. To allow as many
23 people as possible to testify testimony will be
24 limited to three minutes per person and to the extent
25 possible one representative per organization. And

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2 because we have a huge number of people who do want
3 to testify I'm going to have to be very strict about
4 that time limit today so... I want to make that clear
5 to everybody that you... we can give you three minutes
6 to testify. And we understand that the Administration
7 has submitted testimony on Intro 1604 but is
8 available to answer any Council Member questions on
9 the bill. Okay and now we've also been joined by
10 Council Member Garodnick and Council Member Kallos.
11 Okay and then our first panel is made up of Josh
12 Wallack, the Deputy Chancellor, Division of Early
13 Childhood Education and Student Enrollment at the
14 Department of Education and LaShawn Robinson,
15 Executive Superintendent, Office of Equity and Access
16 and before we get started I need to swear you in so
17 I'm going to ask if you could raise your right hand
18 please. Do you solemnly swear or affirm to tell the
19 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth and
20 to answer Council Member questions honestly? Okay,
21 would you like to begin Deputy Chancellor?

22 JOSH WALLACK: Thank you. Good afternoon
23 Chair Dromm, Public Advocate James, Members of the
24 City Council, Committee on Education, other City
25 Council Members. My name is Josh Wallack, I am the

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2 Deputy Chancellor for Early Childhood Education and
3 Student Enrollment at the New York City Department of
4 Education joined by LaShawn Robinson, Executive
5 Superintendent of our Office of Equity and Access. We
6 are so pleased to be here today to discuss the Mayor
7 and Chancellor's commitment to school diversity with
8 you and our ongoing work to make New York City
9 schools more diverse and inclusive. And we really
10 want to begin by thanking the council not only for
11 the opportunity to testify today but for your
12 partnership on this issue, you have been critical
13 partners but real partners in moving this important
14 work forward and we're deeply appreciative of that.
15 In June we released New York City's first citywide
16 school diversity plan, Equity and Excellence for All:
17 Diversity in New York City Public Schools. The plan
18 includes the following policy statement reflecting
19 our commitment to diversity. The New York City
20 Department of Education, DOE is committed to
21 supporting learning environments that reflect the
22 diversity of New York City. We believe all students
23 benefit from diverse and inclusive schools and
24 classrooms where all student's families and school
25 staff are supported and welcomed. This work is

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2 essential to our vision of equity and excellence for
3 all New York City students. When the Department
4 speaks of diversity we acknowledge that diversity
5 comes in many forms; racial background, socioeconomic
6 status, home language, country of origin, immigration
7 status, ability, special needs, religion, gender,
8 gender expression, sexual orientation, housing status
9 and cultural background and experience. We believe,
10 and the research is clear on this, that all students
11 benefit from diverse, inclusive schools and
12 classrooms. The plan includes three initial goals to
13 measure diversity and provide a yardstick for our
14 progress as a city. One, increase the number of
15 students in a racially representative school by
16 50,000 over the next five years, up from 303,412
17 students in racially representative schools today;
18 decrease the number of economically stratified
19 schools by ten percent or 150 schools in the next
20 five years, down from 1,118 economically stratified
21 schools today; and increase the number of inclusive
22 schools that serve English Language Learners and
23 students with disabilities. The plan also lays the
24 foundation for the community engagement and
25 collaboration that must be the primary driver of the

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2 work to make schools more diverse and inclusive going
3 forward. While we have made, and will continue make
4 system wide changes, we made a clear commitment to
5 provide more formal support to community school
6 districts in the development of district wide
7 diversity plans. There will be no one size fits all
8 solution to this challenge and we believe that the
9 most valuable work will be done through partnerships
10 with families, educators and community leaders in all
11 our communities and neighborhoods. And that brings me
12 to a powerful example of this approach. With this
13 commitment to partnership in place and more
14 importantly the extensive work and advocacy of
15 parents, community leaders and educators, we were
16 proud to announce our first ever district wide school
17 diversity plan in Manhattan's District one earlier
18 this fall. The plan includes district wide admissions
19 policy changes and the creation of a new Family
20 Resource Center where families can learn about the
21 strengths of all district one schools and receive
22 admission support in their own language. This fall,
23 we also launched a community engagement process in
24 district 15 in Brooklyn and formed a diversity
25 working group that will meet throughout the school

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2 year and lead at least three public workshops and
3 we're aiming to announce a district 15 middle school
4 diversity plan by the end of the current school year.
5 We are hopeful that the work in districts one and 15
6 can be models for making schools more diverse and
7 inclusive in other parts of the city and we are
8 committed to working with local leaders across
9 communities. Alongside this district based work, we
10 announced in the diversity plan that we would create
11 a citywide School Diversity Advisory Group. The
12 Advisory Group's role is to evaluate our initial plan
13 and goals and make formal recommendations on policies
14 and practices to increase school diversity.
15 Throughout the fall, we've had several planning
16 meetings with the group's Executive Committee and
17 today we announced the full Advisory Group, which in,
18 includes educators, parents, students, advocates and
19 researchers, DOE representatives, and members of the
20 business and labor community. The Advisory Group is
21 co-chaired by Maya Wiley, Jose Calderon, and Hazel
22 Dukes. The first meeting of the full Advisory Group
23 is scheduled for this coming Monday, December 11th;
24 at this meeting the group will review the diversity
25 plan, discuss topics for the Advisory Group to

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2 explore further and map out plans to solicit more
3 ideas and feedback. Members of the Advisory Group
4 will also host town halls over the course of 2018 in
5 every borough to solicit feedback from community
6 members. We are looking forward to the upcoming
7 meeting and will continue to... and will continue to
8 update you on the Advisory Group's progress in the
9 coming months. And we welcome your further engagement
10 particularly as the Advisory Group seeks input from
11 community members across the city. In addition to the
12 policy statement, goals, and Advisory Group and
13 district based work, the diversity plan also includes
14 a set of immediate, concrete actions to address
15 segregation and increase diversity. The actions
16 include several changes to student admissions
17 policies and procedures and efforts to ensure
18 diversity and inclusivity within new and existing
19 schools and programs. And I'd like to highlight just
20 a few of these actions. We are eliminating the
21 Limited Unscreened high school's... high school
22 admissions method through which students would
23 receive priority on their high school application for
24 attending an information session or open house. This
25 created a burden for families and the data clearly

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2 showed that low income students, English Language
3 Learners and black and Hispanic students were less
4 likely to receive the Limited Unscreened priority
5 than their peers. Eliminating Limited Unscreened is
6 one of several actions to make our admissions
7 processes easier and fairer for families and in
8 particular to reduce the burden on low income and
9 non-English speaking families. We are eliminating
10 revealed middle school ranking that encourages
11 families to apply to middle school strategically and
12 not apply to highly competitive programs. We are
13 creating online applications for middle and high
14 school and expanding our NYC School Finder mobile
15 tool which has already been used by 160,000 users
16 since it launched last fall, to all admissions
17 processes. And we are also working with, with schools
18 towards more equitable admission models and trying to
19 make school tours more accessible to all families
20 including by having them during evenings and
21 encouraging schools to offer virtual tours online. We
22 have expanded our Diversity in Admissions pilots,
23 through which schools give priority in their
24 admissions processes to low income students or
25 English Language Learners in order to foster a more

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2 diverse student body. With support from the city
3 council, we started these pilots at just seven
4 elementary schools two years ago and now 42
5 elementary, middle and high schools have a Diversity
6 in Admissions pilot in place and we plan to include
7 community based Pre-K providers for the first time in
8 2018. We expanded initiatives supporting increased
9 diversity at the city's eight specialized high
10 schools. This includes doubling the number of schools
11 participating in the Specialized High School
12 Admissions Test School Day, where we offer the
13 admissions test during the school day at middle
14 schools. It also includes continued expansion of our
15 DREAM program, a free afterschool program that
16 prepares students for the exam. We have seen
17 encouraging results already from this program. DREAM
18 program participants comprised six percent of black
19 and Hispanic students who took the Specialized High
20 School Admissions Test last year but 26 percent of
21 black and Hispanic students who received offers from
22 one of the specialized high schools. And finally, we
23 are committed to diversity as a factor in school
24 rezoning going forward. This builds on rezonings in
25 District three in Manhattan and District 13 in

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2 Brooklyn where diversity was a critical part of the
3 conversation. As we think about how to make schools
4 more diverse and inclusive however, it is also
5 critical that we focus on what's going on inside each
6 school and its classrooms. Beyond simply leveling the
7 playing field for admissions, we must work to make
8 each of our 1,800 schools a high quality and
9 welcoming option for all families. Inside each
10 school, we must work to ensure that all our students
11 regardless of their background have access to
12 rigorous coursework and enrichment. This is the kind
13 of work we're investing in through the... our Equity
14 and Excellence for All agenda; LaShawn Robinson who
15 leads much of this work in our Office of Equity and
16 Access will speak to it in her testimony. I want to
17 take a moment to thank its council for its leadership
18 on making our schools more diverse and inclusive
19 especially Speaker Mark-Viverito, Chair Dromm and
20 Council Members Lander and Torres. In particular the
21 School Diversity Accountability Act provides
22 important oversight for our work, it provides the
23 mechanism for us to measure our progress towards the
24 initial goals in the diversity plan. I want to close
25 by emphasizing that school diversity is a priority

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2 for this Chancellor and this administration and by
3 thanking you again for the opportunity to testify
4 today about what we are doing to advance that
5 priority. While the city has taken significant steps
6 to foster schools that reflect the diversity of our
7 city we know there is so much more work to do. We
8 know that the strides we've made so far would not be
9 possible without the advocacy and voices of the
10 community at large, including members of the Council
11 and we ask for your continued advocacy, feedback and
12 partnership as we move forward with the plan, the
13 Advisory Group and particularly our district and
14 community driven work. Thank you again, and it's my
15 pleasure to introduce LaShawn Robinson.

16 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Thank you. Good
17 afternoon Chair Dromm...

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I don't think that
19 mic is on.

20 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Testing. Alright,
21 thank you. Good afternoon again Chair Dromm and
22 Public Advocate James and members of the Education
23 Committee. My name is LaShawn Robinson and I am the
24 Executive Superintendent of the Department of
25 Education's Office of Equity and Access. The Office

1
2 of Equity and Access plays an important role in
3 advancing the City's Equity and Excellence for All
4 Agenda. As Deputy Chancellor Wallack discussed, our
5 office leads much of the work to ensure that every
6 child, regardless of their background or what
7 neighborhood they live in, is provided with equal
8 opportunity and access to rigorous, high quality
9 coursework. Specifically, we support Advanced
10 Placement for All, Lead Higher, College Access for
11 All at the middle school level, and DREAM Expansion.
12 AP for All is designed to ensure that by fall of
13 2021, students at all high schools will have access
14 to at least five AP classes. The initiative is
15 currently in 152 high schools including 60 that
16 offered no AP courses before the initiative. With
17 initiatives like AP for All, we are telling our
18 students that we believe in them and their ability to
19 go on to college and careers. By ensuring rigorous
20 and high-quality coursework, and by making our
21 schools more equitable in the coursework they offer,
22 we make all our schools... all our high schools more
23 attractive options for students and families. In its
24 first year, AP for All accounted for 32.1 percent of
25 the citywide increase in the number of students

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2 taking one or more AP exams. AP for All schools
3 account for 50.8 percent of the citywide increase in
4 black and Hispanic students taking at least one AP
5 exam, and 29.2 percent of the citywide increase in
6 black and Hispanic students passing at least one AP
7 exam. Our AP for All work aims not only to ensure
8 that all students have rigorous courses at their
9 schools, but that underrepresented students are
10 participating in those courses. We need to make sure
11 not just that our schools are diverse but that
12 underrepresented students have the same opportunities
13 within schools. To this end, we have joined the Lead
14 Higher initiative, which supports schools nationwide
15 to identify low income and black and Hispanic
16 students who are qualified for AP courses but are
17 missing from them. In 2016-17, Lead Higher worked
18 with 24 New York City high schools that already
19 offered several AP courses to identify approximately
20 1,400 underrepresented students who were not taking
21 these courses but could succeed in them. We have
22 worked to enroll these students in AP courses this
23 school year, and our goal is to onboard 15 additional
24 schools into the Lead Higher initiative this school
25 year. In addition to the work of AP for All, my

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2 office oversees the DOE's DREAM Specialized High
3 School Institute which began in 2012. DREAM is a 22-
4 month, extracurricular academic enrichment program
5 designed to help low income, middle school students
6 develop the skills and strategies needed to succeed
7 on the Specialized High Schools Admissions Test.
8 While fewer black and Hispanic students attend our
9 specialized high schools than we would hope, the DOE
10 has developed a six-point specialized high school
11 diversity initiative to increase access to all of our
12 specialized high schools. As part of this six-point
13 initiative, my office launched the DREAM Summer/Fall
14 Intensive program. The program's goal is to increase
15 diversity at the specialized high schools and
16 increase the number of high achieving students from
17 the least represented districts, who take the
18 Specialized High School Admissions Test and receive
19 an offer to a specialized high school. In the 2017
20 admissions cycle, students from the two DREAM
21 programs made up just six percent of the black and
22 Hispanic students who took the SHSAT or the
23 Specialized High School Admissions Test in 2016,
24 however they made up 26 percent of the black and
25 Hispanic students who received offers to the

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2 specialized high schools. Building on the promising
3 results from the DREAM program, my office also
4 established a Capacity Building Initiative for SHSAT
5 preparation that uses the same strategies as the
6 DREAM program. This program provided training for 33
7 schools in underrepresented districts to provide
8 SHSAT preparation. In the first year of the program
9 this spring, over 1,000 6th and 7th grade students
10 enrolled in these school based programs. As an
11 educator, former principal and former high school
12 superintendent, I would also like to speak about the
13 importance of culturally responsive strategies in
14 teaching and the DOE's investments in this work.
15 Culturally responsive teaching is good teaching that
16 demands that students experience academic success, it
17 celebrates and acknowledges multiple perspectives and
18 supports citizenship skills in students by promoting
19 questioning and critical thinking. Culturally
20 responsive teaching ensures that every student gets
21 what they need to be successful. Culturally
22 responsive pedagogy is a priority for this
23 administration including through our Passport to
24 Social Studies curriculum and our training for new
25 teachers and through a Council funded initiative we

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2 will provide culturally responsive training for 600
3 additional teachers this year. And I want to thank
4 Speaker Mark-Viverito and the city council for this
5 funding and your commitment to this work. Excuse me,
6 Viverito. Broadly, while we are headed in the right
7 direction on issues of equity and access, we know we
8 have more work to do and look forward to our
9 continued partnership with the council. Thank you for
10 the opportunity to testify today and we would be
11 happy to answer any questions you may have.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you very
13 much and I did not know that we... the Public Advocate
14 wanted to make a statement so I'm going to give the
15 Public Advocate an opportunity to, to do that now.
16 Thank you, Madame Public Advocate.

17 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: Thank you Chair
18 Dromm. I want to thank the Chair and I want to thank
19 Council Member's Lander and Torres and their staffs
20 and the committee staff for holding this important
21 hearing and Josh it's always great to see you, Josh
22 and I go way back when he used to work for Council
23 Member Lander. So, the Department of Education's
24 response to de facto school segregation was delayed
25 for years and years and when they finally released a

1
2 plan it's lack of ambition was deeply disappointing.
3 Unfortunately, the plan did not even use the word
4 segregation and so how can you fight something as
5 insidious as school segregation if you refuse to even
6 name it, if you refuse to even look it in the face?
7 Children in New York City begin their educational
8 careers with their neighborhood school and now I
9 recognize that housing patterns have a major impact
10 on segregation which is why we cannot look at this
11 issue in isolation. Which neighborhood school your
12 child attends is a... is determined by the zip code
13 where you live and in this case geography can mean
14 destiny and it also can mean separate and unequal.
15 With many neighborhoods facing a rise in real estate
16 prices and escalating rents, communities have become
17 more polarized both economically and racially and
18 that is unfortunate. As someone who grew up in an
19 integrated community I understand and recognize its
20 benefits. Economic and racial segregation play an
21 important role in determining the academic
22 achievement level of children of color. Now I applaud
23 the work of DOE in its attempting to address
24 segregation, but I do not believe this one-off
25 approach is sufficient to address the systematic

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2 issue or the systematic problem of segregation in our
3 public-school system overall which is why I have
4 called for the appointment of Chief Diversity
5 Officer. The Chief Diversity Officer would have a
6 singular focus on this systematic inequity and serve
7 as the single point of contact in accountability.
8 This individual would be tasked with defining what it
9 means to have diversity and equity in our schools.
10 This individual would be... would be charged with
11 taking a holistic view in evaluating present policies
12 and, and practices such as enrollment, class size,
13 co-locations, rezonings, and residential patterns and
14 how these policies and practices have contributed to
15 school segregation. The Chief Diversity Officer would
16 report to the Chancellor or DOE and would provide a
17 corrective action plan to address the systematic
18 issues of segregation and will be the point person
19 responsible for implementing such a plan. Now I am
20 happy and I'm glad that we are tackling this problem.
21 Here we are 54 years after Brown versus the Board of
22 Education and our schools in New York City are more
23 segregated now than... more than ever and so its really
24 critically important that we take this issue on and I
25 commend my colleagues for their years of effort and I

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2 particularly want to shout Council Member Dromm and
3 Council Member Lander who was... stood by my side as we
4 have looked at district 15 and district 13 in
5 downtown Brooklyn but again we need to look at this
6 holistically, systematic and we need to address the
7 issue and call it by it's name, it's name is
8 segregation. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you and here in
10 the council we do this... we do this rather than this,
11 so I would appreciate it since... especially because we
12 have so many people that we're going to be hearing
13 from today. So, thank you very much and thank you for
14 the testimony Deputy Chancellor and from the DOE. Let
15 me start off by just taking off a little bit on
16 something that the Public Advocate had mentioned. And
17 New York City school segregation is often linked to
18 citywide issues such as housing segregation, how are
19 you dealing with that and are you engaging other city
20 agencies to work with you in this diversity plan?

21 JOSH WALLACK: Thanks for the question, I
22 appreciate it. So, the, the, the answer is there is
23 of course a, a deep relationship between the level of
24 segregation and housing in neighborhoods and what we
25 see in terms of school segregation and yes, the, the

1
2 entire... it is a priority for the administration as a
3 whole as well as the Department of Education to try
4 to work on this together and as we move forward for
5 example with plans in land use rezonings we will also
6 be careful to work with our, our sister agencies in
7 addressing these issues. I think as a whole though
8 what we've found is that as we alluded to there are
9 opportunities in every neighborhood to work with
10 partners in schools and in neighborhoods to address
11 these issues and... to work towards systemic citywide
12 solutions but also to work towards local solutions
13 that work in the particular context of that
14 neighborhood and so we're, we're working on both at
15 once, we're working on those big picture issues as
16 you alluded to but also trying to address it
17 neighborhood by neighborhood.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Will the DOE be
19 looking at district rezonings to accomplish the plan?

20 JOSH WALLACK: We do look at... we, we look
21 at rezonings consistently. Many times, they come up
22 for reasons of overcrowding... school overcrowding and
23 what we committed to in our diversity plan is to so
24 that when rezonings come up and as they come up we
25 will look at them with this lens and try to again

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2 engage with communities and neighborhoods to address
3 this issue through the rezoning and use it as an
4 opportunity to engage in these important discussions
5 as those rezonings move forward.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And you're talking
7 about district rezonings versus school zones?

8 JOSH WALLACK: We... I was talking about...
9 [cross-talk]

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: School zones.

11 JOSH WALLACK: School zones... [cross-talk]

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And I'm talking...
13 [cross-talk]

14 JOSH WALLACK: Correct... [cross-talk]

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...about district
16 zones, will, will you be looking at district zones
17 to, to, to redistrict those zones, to redistrict...

18 [cross-talk]

19 JOSH WALLACK: Yeah... [cross-talk]

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...for redistricting I
21 should say.

22 JOSH WALLACK: Yeah, we have no plans at
23 this time to look again at district lines, district
24 zones, we are going to though take a look through the
25 school diversity advisory group at a whole host of

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2 issues that may make a difference in effecting this
3 problem citywide and locally as well.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, I, I would urge
5 you to look at that as a possible solution as well,
6 that's something that I know would have a, a big
7 impact on, on my district, my council district as
8 well as the two school districts that I represent
9 also so I would ask you to look at that.

10 JOSH WALLACK: Okay, thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: The DOE's diversity
12 plan has citywide goals, but have you thought about
13 district wide goals citywide and then... another word
14 having districts themselves outside of the districts
15 that have already stepped up to come up with goals
16 for their districts?

17 JOSH WALLACK: So, the answer is yes, I
18 think we're very interested in... as part of the work
19 of the Advisory Group that's coming up and also part
20 of the district work that we have committed to as
21 part of our citywide diversity plan we're very
22 interested in hearing from other school districts
23 that want to engage with us in planning together in
24 setting significant and ambitious goals for their
25 districts and working together to meet them. So... and

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2 we're particularly interested in partnering with all
3 of you and, and in the districts that you represent
4 to advance that work. So, that is... that is a key part
5 of the plan is working with neighborhoods and
6 communities that are interested in stepping forward
7 and saying we want to partner with you, the
8 Department of Education to figure out innovative
9 solutions to get at this.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, and the overall
11 diversity plan group are CEC members represented
12 there?

13 JOSH WALLACK: In the Advisory Group we
14 do have family representatives from the citywide
15 group of CEC presidents, yes.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Have you begun any
17 outreach to individual CEC's outside of district 15
18 or one?

19 JOSH WALLACK: We have talked with
20 several CEC's that have been interested in this and
21 as those conversations continue and we move forward
22 into more formal discussions we can keep you posted
23 on that... [cross-talk]

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: It would be very nice
25 to see a grassroots campaign on this from folks who

1
2 are in the districts themselves begin to come up with
3 some ideas about how they might be able to think
4 about the... diversifying their schools which is
5 actually how I think it happened in the 15 if I'm not
6 mistaken.

7 JOSH WALLACK: That's absolutely right
8 and the way it happened in district one I have to say
9 just to take a moment, I alluded it... to it in the
10 testimony but I think it's a powerful example of what
11 you're pointing out which is that the ideas for how
12 to address the, the, the segregation that we saw in
13 district one schools came from family advocates and,
14 and citywide advocates that came together with school
15 leaders and the superintendent to try to come up with
16 solutions and we at the Department of Education spent
17 a good long time trying to provide assistance and
18 learning from them the way they wanted to come at the
19 problem and ultimately they came up with the best
20 ideas and the ones we ultimately moved forward with.
21 So, that's why the Chancellor and the Mayor are
22 convinced that ultimately some of the best solutions
23 that we'll have will come from communities,
24 neighborhoods and schools that want to develop plans
25 that respond to the unique context of that

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2 neighborhood, that school, that community and that's
3 what we stand ready to do.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: How are you going to
5 work with districts that are not coming up with their
6 own plans?

7 JOSH WALLACK: So, the, the Chancellor
8 has made it clear that this is a, a priority for all
9 of us and we have found that the response across the
10 city has been encouraging and in particular from our
11 school leaders and superintendents across the city
12 who are coming up with ideas for how to address this.
13 So, I think what you'll find is that as the citywide
14 diversity Advisory Group begins it's work and as
15 local neighbor... as, as neighborhood leaders and
16 school leaders come forward we are going to see ideas
17 from across the city.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, is it correct to
19 state then that the Chancellor has spoken with
20 superintendents about possibility... the possibility of
21 coming up with district diversity plans?

22 JOSH WALLACK: The Chancellor has spoken
23 with each of them about the importance of the issue
24 and about engaging with their school leaders to try
25 to find innovative solutions, yes.

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CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, I'd also like to suggest that you get... discuss with them that possibility of coming up with plans within those... within, within their own districts.

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JOSH WALLACK: I think each of them is looking at... again the context is important and the, the ways that they address the, the issues in elementary schools and in middle schools differ from the ones... the approaches that they take in high schools which are citywide and so I think it's going to be... and coming upon us to work hand in hand with them and with, you know neighborhood leaders and community leaders to come up with these solutions some of which are going to be specific to districts, many of which are going to be citywide and we're going to have to work on all those together.

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LASHAWN ROBINSON: And... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And you're, you're...

[cross-talk]

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LASHAWN ROBINSON: ...additionally... excuse me, we look forward to learning from each other as part of the process as well, so as promising practices emerge we look forward to sharing those practices across superintendents and CECs and

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2 communities, learning and implementing the best
3 practices across the city.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, its good to hear
5 that you're open to those suggestions from CECs and
6 from individual districts. Let me just go to the
7 50/90 percent school population issue as well.

8 JOSH WALLACK: Uh-huh.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Can you explain your
10 rational for developing this definition?

11 JOSH WALLACK: Yes, so the way we came
12 at... well first of all let me just say I'll, I'll...
13 before I explain the definition, we put out these
14 goals as a way to set... first of all initial goals for
15 ourselves to hold ourselves accountable and to, you
16 know share with you to hold us accountable but second
17 to begin a discussion about whether these are the
18 right goals and whether we need to change them and
19 that is I think one of the first pieces of work that
20 we are going to do in collaboration with the school
21 diversity Advisory Group and we welcome your feedback
22 as well. This was a, a... these are as I referred to
23 them, initial goals and we're very open to your
24 thoughts about it. The way we came at it is when we
25 looked at the... our definition for racially

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2 representative is we, we looked... we, we looked across
3 the system and we saw that black and Hispanic
4 children make up 70 percent of our students citywide
5 and so we looked at the number of schools that, that...
6 where black and Hispanic students combined made up at
7 least 50 percent of the student population but no
8 more than 90 percent, we went 20 percent on either
9 side and as you pointed out we found that only 31
10 percent of our schools are racially representative
11 today by that definition and, and so we believed that
12 by setting ourselves a significant but achievable
13 goal to bring more schools into that 50 to 90 percent
14 band we would make significant progress. Of course,
15 we would... as our, our overarching goal is for as many
16 schools to reflect the full diversity of New York
17 City as possible so again that's an initial goal, we
18 believe it's significant and achievable but we're
19 ready to engage in conversation with you as partners
20 to figure out whether there are other goals or
21 whether we should just make changes to those goals
22 going forward.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: How does you first
24 diversity goal work toward addressing the amount of
25 Asian and white students in attending segregated

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2 schools? How does... how does your, your first goal
3 address the issue of getting white and Asian students
4 to attend some of these diverse... segregated schools?

5 JOSH WALLACK: So, the goal... the, the
6 goal on racial representativeness is a way of again
7 setting ourselves a significant but achievable goal
8 of having more schools reflect the overall diversity
9 of New York City. So, if we have more schools that
10 are showing a representative number of black and
11 Hispanic students they will also reflect the overall
12 mix... they'll, they'll better reflect the overall mix
13 of students that are in the New York City public
14 school system as a whole. I think the answer to your
15 question overall is, is, is that we're going to
16 implement a number of initiatives some of which I
17 outlined in the testimony throughout our system in
18 order to make schools more diverse. I also think that
19 as we... as we go we, we have to keep in mind that
20 we're simultaneously implementing a really ambitious
21 agenda, the Equity and Excellence for All agenda that
22 introduces new initiatives at every level of school
23 to make all of our schools better and to make them
24 more attractive to more families, that is a key part
25 of our... that's why the diversity plan is part of

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2 Equity and Excellence for All agenda because these
3 are really part of the same mission, part of the same
4 effort. As our schools improve more and more families
5 will want to be in them and it will become easier and
6 easier for us to create diverse, diverse and
7 inclusive schools if we put the work in as we've
8 discussed.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Deputy Chancellor in
10 your testimony you mentioned that you've expanded the
11 Diversity in Admission's pilot program and you
12 started these with just seven schools two years ago
13 and now 42 elementary schools and high schools have
14 the Diversity in Admissions program, is there any
15 fear that that's going to pull from other schools
16 within the district and make them less integrated,
17 how, how do you see the, the pilot program there
18 affecting the other schools in the districts?

19 JOSH WALLACK: I, I appreciate the
20 question and I think what we found so far is that
21 the, the pilot programs have been successful in, in
22 attracting diverse groups of families to schools and
23 we've been able to offer.. make offers to those
24 schools to the students that we were hoping to
25 attract to those schools so that's been a success. We

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2 have not seen impacts on other schools so far and we
3 have heard that concern along the way and watched
4 carefully for that and I think it's up to all of us
5 to keep an eye on that together and monitor it, I
6 think it will be something that the school diversity
7 Advisory Group looks at carefully and we want to make
8 sure that the, the, the impact on schools and
9 communities is positive and we'll work together to
10 ensure that.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay and then let me
12 ask this last question and then I'll go to other
13 members for questions as well and then come back if
14 we... if we have other questions but if you achieve
15 your first goal there will still be schools that have
16 90 to 100 percent students of color in them, do you
17 have plans of how you're going to deal with that once
18 you get to that point?

19 JOSH WALLACK: So, again I think there
20 are a couple of answers to that question or three.
21 One is that these are initial goals and think we set
22 them out as a way of measuring our progress in some
23 of this work that we're going to do together in the
24 coming years. I think second we are going to rely on
25 the expertise of our Advisory Group but also the

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2 expertise of the community leaders and school leaders
3 and families that we're going to be talking to in
4 2018 to give us some ideas about how to go even
5 further and then I think third, our, our Equity in
6 Excellence for All initiatives as our school quality
7 improves across the board and we're deepening those
8 investments in our student success we're going to see
9 more and more progress, it will build on itself.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you and
11 now I'd like to introduce Council Member Brad Lander
12 who was one of the authors of the School Diversity
13 Accountability Act and who has been working very
14 closely with me on this issue and who I deeply
15 appreciate his support. Thank you.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you Chair
17 Dromm for your leadership on these issues and so many
18 other ways of making our schools more just and
19 inclusive places. Deputy Chancellor and Executive
20 Superintendent it's, it's good to have you here as
21 well and an enormous thank you to this great group of
22 people that have come to testify that includes so
23 many people who have been working to fight school
24 segregation and make inclusive schools work both as a
25 whole system and in the schools, themselves. You know

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2 a, a few things are true and it's hard to hold them
3 all together; one is that the problem of school
4 segregation is a deep stain on the city and the
5 country and that sits on all of us. Over the summer I
6 read this book, The Color of Law which just shows
7 that through public policy we chose segregated
8 schools and then having chosen them we had a brief
9 period where we thought we'd do something about it
10 and then we really forgot about that and so when that
11 UCLA report woke us up to what was plain to see for
12 everyone we were far behind where we should be and
13 that the consequences of that as the Public Advocate
14 said are to consign opportunities to our kids based
15 on their race and class and neighborhood just... such a
16 violation of everything we say and believe the
17 country's about and that's true. Now it's also true
18 that we're traveled some real distance from the
19 hearing that we had here three plus years ago thanks
20 to strong advocacy from communities and students and
21 educators, real work in schools, I'm proud of the
22 work this council's done, I want to thank Chair Dromm
23 and, and Council Member Torres who will come back and
24 you know the administration's approach has evolved
25 significantly since that hearing. If you go back and

1
2 look at the testimony of the administration at that
3 time, I won't repeat too much about pen pals and real
4 estate values but the tone, the... and... that you're
5 taking today is significant and there's real action
6 to back it up. The district one controlled choice
7 model is a significant district wide approach. The
8 plan while I'm glad we're going to have a dialogue
9 about pushing and improving the numbers, setting
10 numbers and real goals to do something is the only
11 way that you can have a serious approach to it, we
12 weren't doing that before, it took real pushing to
13 get there and I appreciate the leadership that you
14 guys have shown and that the, you know the Chancellor
15 and Mayor have done that. And the school diversity
16 Advisory Group is a real opportunity to move forward
17 in part because there is a tension here between the
18 moral injustice of school segregation which we ought
19 to move forward on immediately and the reality that
20 we have to build support to do that. It shouldn't be
21 true, we shouldn't only integrate our schools if we
22 can make people comfortable, but it is of course also
23 true that we have to make neighborhoods partners in
24 doing the work if the plan and the schools are going
25 to succeed. So, that's a contradiction that is on all

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2 of us and I hope the school diversity Advisory Group
3 can be a real way to do it. Now it's also true that
4 though we've traveled some good distance in these
5 three years this is not like a pat ourselves on the
6 back and feel good about the progress we're making,
7 it's real progress and still 70 percent of our
8 schools aren't racially representative in this
9 already too, you know broad definition and every day
10 that's what we're sending our kids to. So, so that's
11 the... like just that's the push and pull of this
12 hearing and of this work and I appreciate that we're
13 here trying to do it together and I really want to
14 thank those doing the pushing as well as those trying
15 to make it work in a big bureaucracy and those trying
16 to make it work every day inside school buildings
17 too. So, I, I guess... as I appreciate Chair Dromm's
18 questions and I think you said that you're going to
19 look at the goals and consider them in the school
20 diversity Advisory Group, I want to underline his
21 point about 90 percent especially because I noticed
22 in looking at the third annual report you got a
23 couple of schools in there that went from like 85
24 percent to 87 percent black and Latino and we're
25 still calling those racially representative so I

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2 think that takes a little digging. I guess I also
3 want to ask here... well actually first one thing on
4 the school diversity Advisory Group I just had... you
5 know you just announced it this morning, I've had a
6 few emails from it, it looks like it doesn't include
7 yet a, a Muslim representative or maybe also a, a
8 Jewish representative in a city with a lot of Muslims
9 and a lot of religious Jews in our public schools you
10 can take a second look but if, if it is true that
11 that doesn't... yet on there can I have your commitment
12 that we'll add people to it to represent those
13 communities?

14 JOSH WALLACK: Thanks for the question, I
15 understand, and we want to make sure that the
16 Advisory Group has a full range of perspectives. I
17 think one thing that's important to underscore is
18 that the Advisory Group is, is a group that's going
19 to solicit further input from all communities
20 throughout New York City and we'll be hosting town
21 halls throughout New York City and we'll make sure
22 that every view is included. Let me take a look at
23 what you're pointing out and... [cross-talk]

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Please do...
25 [cross-talk]

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JOSH WALLACK: ...we'll get back to you...

[cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: ...one in every eight students in our schools is Muslim and it's, it's... you looked clearly as sort of how we think of as ethnic categories to make sure those are included, I would just urge you to take a second look at that. I have a lot more questions, I am glad to wait for my second round to... can I ask one more question now and then I'll wait for my second round? Just on the... on the data, it is good even if we're going to push hard to make them ambitious that we have goals, it is good that there are some strategies like the district level plans to try to make a difference and it's good that we have this annual report mechanism to look at the data but I think like each of those three things came from a different place and it doesn't look to me yet like we're aligning them up, like alright here's our big goal, here's which strategies we think are going to get there, here's trend analysis every year to know which strategies are working and are not working so we can really push that forward and I, I just... I hope we can work together to get those three things in, in better alignment than they are.

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2 JOSH WALLACK: I think that's really
3 helpful and we'd be glad to work with you on that, I
4 think it's all part of the work that we want to do
5 together in the coming year to, to make this strategy
6 even stronger.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Alright, thank
8 you. I have plenty more, but I'll wait for my second
9 round.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you
11 Council Member Lander and also now we're going to
12 turn to Council Member Ritchie Torres who is also a
13 co-sponsor of the School Diversity Accountability Act
14 and I want to thank him for his involvement in this
15 issue, thank you very much Council Member.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Thank you, thank
17 you Mr. Chair and thank you Chancellor. I'm going to
18 ask more about larger principles than about the
19 details of the plan, you know as you know more than
20 63 is a good... 63 years ago the Supreme Court in Brown
21 versus the Board of Education famously held that
22 separate but equal is inherently unequal in the field
23 of the public education and I know you agree with the
24 outcome of Brown but, but do you agree with the, the
25

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2 deeper logic of Brown versus the Board of Education
3 that separate but equal can never be equal?

4 JOSH WALLACK: Of course I think we all
5 believe that at the Department of Education, yes.
6 And, and I would just say the, the Mayor and
7 Chancellor I think have made this a priority for us
8 because they believe in the priority and the urgency
9 of this set of issues and we are, you know moving
10 forward. As, as Council Member Lander pointed out
11 with great urgency but also with an attempt to engage
12 communities across New York City in the urgent work
13 of finding ways to address this.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: And according to
15 the UCLA project in 2014 we have the most segregated
16 school system in the nation, do you acknowledge that
17 intense segregation is a crisis in public education?

18 JOSH WALLACK: We do believe that the
19 segregation in New York City schools is an urgent
20 issue that needs to be addressed.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: So, if, if you
22 think segregation is a crisis as I do why does your
23 plan of action fail to even use the word segregation?

24 JOSH WALLACK: So, the... we use the
25 diversity in the plan for a specific reason, I mean

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2 first we acknowledge and the Mayor and Chancellor
3 have acknowledged that segregation exists in New York
4 City schools and we want to address it. In the... in
5 the plan we use the word diversity for a specific
6 reason which is that sometimes when we use the term
7 segregation people assume that we are talking only
8 about racial or economic segregation and we wanted to
9 underscore that our plan addresses the full range of
10 types of diversity that we seek in the New York City
11 school system. The list that we went through in the
12 beginning of the testimony which I won't read through
13 again but includes gender identity, gender
14 expression, sexual orientation... [cross-talk]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: With, with
16 respect... [cross-talk]

17 JOSH WALLACK: Yeah... [cross-talk]

18 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: ...Chancellor...
19 [cross-talk]

20 JOSH WALLACK: Sorry... [cross-talk]

21 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: ...I feel like
22 we're creating a conflict where none exists, it's
23 possible to celebrate diversity in the broader sense
24 but also recognize that class and racial segregation
25 is a historical problem that poisons public

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2 education, that poisons every aspect of American life
3 and, and the concern I have is that if we're not
4 giving the problem the historical name that it bears
5 by refusing to even use the word segregation, I worry
6 that we're whitewashing the historical context of
7 racism that explains why our schools have been so
8 inequitable for so long and... so, for me it's not...
9 it's not only about words, it's about a proper
10 diagnosis of the historical context of our public
11 school system.

12 JOSH WALLACK: I appreciate the question
13 and the statement, certainly was not our intention to
14 distract in any way from those urgent problems and
15 questions and we are committed to working in
16 partnership with you to address them and as I said we
17 don't see any... we don't see any conflict at all in
18 addressing all those different types... [cross-talk]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: So, if there were
20 no conflict maybe we should use the word segregation
21 in the city's strategic vision.

22 JOSH WALLACK: I appreciate the... [cross-
23 talk]

24 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Yes... [cross-talk]

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JOSH WALLACK: ...comment and question and,

and as we go forward I think that the Advisory Group

and in the conversations, we have we'll be very...

we'll be careful and thoughtful about the language we

use and the ideas we... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Don't be careful

be bold in describing the problem.

LASHAWN ROBINSON: We'll be bold... [cross-

talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Be bold... [cross-

talk]

LASHAWN ROBINSON: We'll be bold in

describing the problem and the... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: And then be bold

in... [cross-talk]

LASHAWN ROBINSON: ...Mayor... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: ...solving it.

LASHAWN ROBINSON: And in solving it and

we're looking forward to partnering with you... [cross-

talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Yes... [cross-talk]

LASHAWN ROBINSON: ...the Mayor and the

Chancellor they've used the word segregation, we

acknowledge that... [cross-talk]

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COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: And let's put it
in writing... [cross-talk]

LASHAWN ROBINSON: We acknowledge that we
have an issue here and we're looking forward to
addressing the issue... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: So, screening...

LASHAWN ROBINSON: Uh-huh...

COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Do you
acknowledge that screening contributes toward
segregation and therefore undercuts the goal of
equity for all in education?

JOSH WALLACK: So, screened programs in
schools play a role in the landscape of New York City
education, they do bring students and families that
are interested in particular programs and bring
certain talents and abilities. We as an
administration are looking carefully and I think
we'll do this work in partnership with you and the
advisory group to look at the ways that screened and
selective programs affect our ability and plans...
[cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Yes, so, so...
[cross-talk]

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JOSH WALLACK: ...to increased diversity..

[cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: I'll answer my
own question... [cross-talk]

JOSH WALLACK: Okay... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: ...I think the
answer to that question is yes. So, I want to know do
you think it's... does it... do you believe it
contributes toward segregation and undercuts the goal
of equity for all, do you believe it's not clear, do
you believe the answer's no?

JOSH WALLACK: We believe that we need to
work together with communities around New York City
to look at that... each case in context... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: I, I love
collaboration but... [cross-talk]

JOSH WALLACK: No, no, I, I'm... [cross-
talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: ...answer my...
[cross-talk]

JOSH WALLACK: ...I'm answering the
question...

COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Yeah...

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JOSH WALLACK: I think that it depends on the context and it depends on the way... the way the, the, the community and the particular set of screens play out, I think this is a set of issues that we need to look at carefully and we need to go school by school, neighborhood by neighborhood, I don't think there's a one size fits all answer but I do think that it is an issue would do... we would do well to examine together and as a matter of policy we are not adding new screened seats to the system..

COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Why is that?

JOSH WALLACK: Because we... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Because you have this feeling that it might contribute toward segregation, right?

JOSH WALLACK: It's not, not a feeling, we believe that we want to... as, as, as Executive Superintendent Robinson has said we want to increase access to more programs for more students, so we want to give as many student's opportunities to access schools and programs as possible, we want to maximize the choices... [cross-talk]

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COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Do you think screening inhibits access to opportunities and programming?

LASHAWN ROBINSON: I, I think it's clear that we need to take a step back and look at the systems that created segregation in our schools... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: I, I don't want to... just be bold in diagnosing the problem...

LASHAWN ROBINSON: Absolutely... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: ...my... [cross-talk]

LASHAWN ROBINSON: So, we do know that we need to take a look at policies and practices... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: I hope we move... [cross-talk]

LASHAWN ROBINSON: ...that have led us... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: ...towards the elimination of screening for what it's worth so... I know my time has expired so...

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, thank you and... [cross-talk]

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LASHAWN ROBINSON: Thank, thank you...

[cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And we now have questions from Council Member Rose followed by Council Member Treyger.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you Chair and good afternoon. My questions are, are centered around two, two ideas. I'm really concerned about the DREAM program, is it in all of the schools and if so how are they selected and it... well answer those two because they're relatively short?

LASHAWN ROBINSON: So, the DREAM program is a citywide program that seeks to increase socioeconomic diversity, it's a citywide program across all... it supports all districts across the city. We have also introduced two new programs that are connected to DREAM... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: No, no, no, I just want to know about the DREAM... [cross-talk]

LASHAWN ROBINSON: Sorry... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: ...program and...

[cross-talk]

LASHAWN ROBINSON: These are DREAM programs... [cross-talk]

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COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: ...you said across all districts but is it in all of the schools, all of the high schools?

LASHAWN ROBINSON: It, it supports middle school students, it's not in... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Middle school... [cross-talk]

LASHAWN ROBINSON: ...high schools in particular but it supports students across all districts. The criteria for students to participate they need to... for DREAM qualify for free and reduced-price lunch in addition to having a particular score on the ELA and math examinations. We also have DREAM the intensive... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

LASHAWN ROBINSON: ...which supports students from all socioeconomic backgrounds, so the DREAM intensive is focused on geographic diversity, so we recruit students from the districts that send the fewest number of students to the specialized high schools so we're targeting additional supports to those districts through the DREAM intensive and recently we implemented the capacity building

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2 initiative which seeks to bring test prep supports at
3 the school level so with... [cross-talk]

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: So, in the schools
5 that the DREAM program and the DREAM initiative are
6 not what efforts are being made to help these
7 students so that they too are prepared for the
8 Specialized High School Test?

9 LASHAWN ROBINSON: So, through the
10 capacity building initiative we seek to bring the
11 skills to teachers and students that are necessary
12 for students to do well on a Specialized High Schools
13 Achievement Test... or Admissions test at the school
14 level so training teachers where they can have test
15 prep right at their schools, they can work to align
16 the curricula from the school day with some of the
17 skills necessary on the test so, really looking at
18 bringing... instead of having students have to leave
19 their school community to go to an after school test
20 prep program to be able to do it right on site in
21 their schools.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: So, my question
23 really is, is how many schools... [cross-talk]

24 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

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COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: ...actually have this particular specialized prep that they are able to utilize?

LASHAWN ROBINSON: So, we recently implemented the capacity building initiative in 33 schools, the DREAM intensive supports 15 districts and DREAM supports all districts across the city.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: And so every student has the opportunity to participate?

LASHAWN ROBINSON: Not every student...
[cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: That qualifies?

LASHAWN ROBINSON: Every student who qualifies and submits an application can earn a seat in DREAM but it's by lottery also.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Okay, how many students would you say participated in the DREAM program?

LASHAWN ROBINSON: We have 3,100 seats in DREAM, almost 800 seats in the intensive and approximately 1,000 seats in the capacity building initiative.

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COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: And so, yet only six percent took the test, is that concerning to you and what are you doing to improve that number?

LASHAWN ROBINSON: We have an, an extremely high number, over 90 some odd percent of students who... of DREAM students who take the test, six percent of testers, black and Hispanic testers were DREAM students while 26 percent of students who received offers were from DREAM. So, while we make up a very small percentage of testers many of our students receive offers.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: So, please just bear with me a moment.

LASHAWN ROBINSON: Sure.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Testers, what is that, is that not students who take the test or is that some... [cross-talk]

LASHAWN ROBINSON: Absolutely, testers, yes... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Okay, so of all the... of the number of students that participated in the program only six percent took the test, right?

LASHAWN ROBINSON: No...

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: No...

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2 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Six percent of the
3 testers citywide. So, we have approximately 27,000
4 students who sit for the test each year and six
5 percent of the black and Hispanic students who sat
6 for the... [cross-talk]

7 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Right... [cross-talk]

8 LASHAWN ROBINSON: ...test out of the
9 27,000 are DREAM students.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: So, do you think
11 that's an appropriate number, do you think that it...
12 are you pleased with that, that number, that
13 percentage?

14 LASHAWN ROBINSON: No, I would love for
15 more students to be DREAM students... [cross-talk]

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: What are you...
17 [cross-talk]

18 LASHAWN ROBINSON: ...and... [cross-talk]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: ...doing to improve
20 that, that number?

21 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Over the last two
22 years we've almost doubled the number of seats in
23 DREAM and my office we've been creative in thinking
24 about geographic diversity and targeting resources to
25 communities most in need so looking at the districts

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that's in the fewest number of students at the specialized high schools we're also looking at building capacity which I believe is a high leverage area for this work, training teachers at the school level where they would have greater capacity to support more students. I envision a system where all... we will have DREAM test prep at all schools by building capacity at the school level so that there will be trained teachers at each school.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: And so how long do you think that's going to take?

LASHAWN ROBINSON: We're working on that now, we've been in partnership with several districts notably... recently district 32 who wants to do some of this work across the district, I don't have a time line right now, but I can certainly get that information back to you.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: I think it's critically important because... [cross-talk]

LASHAWN ROBINSON: I agree... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: ...that number to me is a dismal... and I'm not sure if the efforts match the, the outcome that you're trying to get. Thank you.

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LASHAWN ROBINSON: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Can I just do a follow up on that, so of, of the 3,100 that there are seats for were all those seats occupied?

LASHAWN ROBINSON: Yes because we also have a wait list for the program and as seats become available we do utilize the wait list procedure by ensuring that the seats are full by pulling students from the wait list.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, they were able to be used, those seats?

LASHAWN ROBINSON: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Alright, thank you. How big is the wait list?

LASHAWN ROBINSON: I can get that information for you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Alright, thank you.

LASHAWN ROBINSON: You're welcome.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Council Member Treyger.

COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Thank you very much Mr. Chair and I, I have to note in, in the audience there's my education professor from Brooklyn College Professor David Bloomfield, thank you we, we

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2 earned a good grade in your class and he, he helped
3 inform my, my classmates and me... I was in class... in
4 school to go for my Graduate Degree in education and
5 being a former educator that Brown versus the Board
6 of Education might have ended the jury segregation,
7 but it certainly did not end because we still have de
8 facto segregation today in our public-school system.
9 I also just want to note to my colleagues that there
10 is an intertwined relationship between what we're
11 hearing here about today and the housing policies and
12 the rezonings that we go through that are extremely
13 contentious, whenever we strive and push for economic
14 diversity and diversity of all kinds of neighborhoods
15 there sometimes is incredible tension and so it
16 should not be a shock that we're seeing that
17 unfortunately play out in the classrooms and hallways
18 of, of our schools but I want to hone in on certain
19 areas. First, first of all if there is another... I, I
20 want to point out from my lens as helping in the
21 recovery of my neighborhood post super storm Sandy,
22 there are schools in my... public schools in my
23 district that took years to even get their fire
24 alarms fixed after super storm Sandy, there were
25 schools in my district that it took literally over

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2 four years to get temporary boilers replaced. If
3 those schools were in the wealthiest parts of New
4 York, there would have been probably fixed within a
5 month or two at the most. And so, we see that play
6 out in terms... not just enrollment in schools but
7 also, I think investments or lack of investments
8 throughout all parts of New York. I also want to
9 discuss another civil rights crisis in my opinion, I
10 worked in inclusion classes, I have seen for example
11 that there are schools that still have separate
12 attendance rosters for Gen-Ed students and students
13 labeled special education. I have seen that there are
14 kids that the system has labeled as failures, when
15 they have talents and abilities that we have never
16 tapped into in all their years of their schooling. I
17 think that is a major civil rights crisis as well,
18 how we measure progress in our schools and I think
19 that when, when parents who I support absolutely
20 there, their power to make decisions about where to...
21 and their guardians to send, send their children I
22 think that this issue is so intertwined with the
23 achievement gap in, in so many different ways;
24 economic factors, racial factors, socioeconomic
25 factors. What are we doing to also make sure that the

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2 way we evaluate students is reflective of this push
3 for diversity as well, diversity of abilities,
4 diversities of talents because I have seen firsthand
5 from my experience in the classroom students that
6 have been labeled failure or labeled as special
7 needs, had talents and abilities that kids in
8 Stuyvesant and Brooklyn Tech did... didn't have. So,
9 how is that going to be addressed and the last
10 question I, I also want to ask, with the expansion of
11 charter schools has that continued and exacerbated
12 or... in any way with regards to this issue of school,
13 school segregation figures and numbers, there was an...
14 there was an article I read recently, a national
15 publication saying that there is this big push and
16 big debate and a big fight between some charter,
17 charter networks whether diversity is a... is a
18 priority or whether you have to focus strictly on
19 just achievements in, in the individual schools, I'd
20 be curious to, to hear your thoughts?

21 JOSH WALLACK: So, I'll start and try to
22 answer the three of the them and then you may want to
23 jump in on more than one. First of all, just on your
24 broader point about equity in other areas, I think
25 this... our efforts as a... as we alluded to earlier, our

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2 part and parcel of this administration's overall
3 efforts to achieve greater equity across many
4 different fields across the city and so happy to hear
5 more about... I know that other parts of the
6 administration are grappling with the issues in your
7 particular geography and, and we in the school system
8 on the, the, the facilities issues that we
9 encountered so we can talk about that further. I
10 think second, take them in slightly different order,
11 I think your, your point about students with
12 disabilities is an important one and its part of the
13 reason why we included that in the diversity plan. I
14 think we are trying to build on a set of reforms that
15 the department took on some years ago called Shared
16 Path to Success which is meant to ensure that every
17 student can thrive in every school regardless of
18 their abilities and their special needs and this
19 Chancellor has pushed forward aggressively on that
20 agenda and has held all of us to a very high standard
21 there. I think in particular one effort I would
22 point... bring attention to which the office of student
23 enrollment has been involved in has been increasing
24 the... a number of students with disabilities that are
25 gaining access to our most selective schools and

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2 we've worked hand in hand with really committed
3 school leaders to make that work and to help those
4 students not just attend but thrive in those schools
5 and that's just one example of a way that I think we
6 are working together with schools and communities to
7 build all different types of diversity through our
8 schools and classrooms, I don't know if you want to
9 add to that.

10 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Yes, some of the
11 additional work that we're doing through the Advanced
12 Placement for All initiative is ensuring that
13 students with disabilities and English Language
14 Learners have access to these courses. Through AP for
15 All we find that students who attend... when we look at
16 the demographics of students who attend AP for All
17 classes we have more students with disabilities in
18 those classes than in AP classes citywide, we have
19 more English Language Learners in those classes than
20 in AP classes citywide, we have more black and
21 Hispanic students in those classes than in AP
22 programs citywide so we're making gains in those
23 areas while we're also providing supports for
24 teachers and for students alike to excel in those
25 classes.

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COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: But, but why is it allowed in the public-school system to have separate attendance rosters for general... for Gen Ed students and kids with special needs, that creates a separate entire system within a school?

JOSH WALLACK: Not familiar with that particular practice so I would love to follow... we'd love to follow up with you afterwards... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Very good... [cross-talk]

JOSH WALLACK: ...and discuss that... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: ...my time is up, thank you... [cross-talk]

JOSH WALLACK: Okay... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: ...Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay and thank you very much. Before we turn... go to the second round of questions here, I just want to follow up with some questions in terms of economically stratified schools. So, the goal... the second goal of the diversity plan is to decrease the number of economically stratified schools by ten percent or 150 schools over the next five years. The DOE considers

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an economically stratified school to be... if economic need is measured by the economic needs index is more than ten percentage points from the citywide average, can you explain the DOE's rationale for developing this definition?

JOSH WALLACK: Yes, just... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And, and also can you explain... [cross-talk]

JOSH WALLACK: Sure... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...what exactly does economically stratified mean?

JOSH WALLACK: Sure, so what we were trying to capture there is... again we want schools that reflect the diversity of New York City in every way and so this was an attempt to help set a goal for ourselves where our goals would reflect economic diversity of the city. We looked at... the economic need index is information that the Department of Education uses to look at the likelihood that students in a school are facing economic hardship and... so we look at things like eligibility for public assistance, the housing situation that that particular family faces and, and we look at other data from the census and from the neighborhood that

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2 they live in and so this is really an attempt again
3 to ensure that our schools are not... are, are
4 reflecting that full diversity and are, are... don't
5 have a concentration of students exclusively with
6 very high economic need which gives us a better
7 chance of serving the particular needs of those
8 students.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, is, is, is that a
10 little different than Title one being a Title one
11 school because it's only economic... I guess... because
12 it's only based on income level and there are other
13 factors to economic need?

14 JOSH WALLACK: That's right... [cross-talk]

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And that's why you've
16 chosen to use this index?

17 JOSH WALLACK: We believe it's a... it's a...
18 we believe that both measures are important but that
19 this one also captures important information about a
20 family and again allows us to work towards a system
21 in which schools better reflect a range of
22 experiences and... of, of students.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, then what
24 strategies and mechanisms do you plan to use to
25 decrease those... the number of those schools?

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JOSH WALLACK: So, it's really the strategies that we've been talking about, I think that many of the same ones working neighborhood by neighborhood and school by school to modify some admissions practices, also look at programs that can attract different schools to the... different students to those schools. I think our Equity in Excellence initiatives attract a range of students to schools and help them succeed and I think some of the work that we've talked about to make sure that all of our schools are welcoming and inclusive to all students will go a long way as well. So, it's a range of strategies.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, your plan for racially representative schools includes charter schools but the DOE's goal of increasing the number of economically stratified schools does not, can you explain why?

JOSH WALLACK: So, I would say that are strategy as a whole does in... does include charter schools. Some of the specific numbers that we use here are really just measuring progress in the schools that we... for which we oversee enrollment but overall as a... as the Department of Education we work

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2 very closely with our partners in the charter sector
3 and we hope to do so on this issue as well. We think
4 we have a lot to learn from one another about how to
5 make more diverse schools and classrooms, we plan to
6 share best practices with them as we go as part of
7 our district charter partnership program and we do
8 have a couple of wonderful representatives from the
9 charter sector on the school diversity Advisory Group
10 so that we have a way of sharing their perspectives
11 and learning from them as we go.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, we're going to
13 go to Council Member Lander followed by Rose.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you Mr.
15 Chair and I don't want to go on too long because I
16 really want to get to this great group, but I
17 obviously do have a few more questions and I'll just
18 flag... you have some, some slots on the student
19 diversity Advisory Group for students through both
20 the Chancellors advisory council and Integrate NYC
21 for me, yes?

22 JOSH WALLACK: Yes... [cross-talk]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Which is great,
24 Integrate NYC for me is here in force and actually
25 they're going to back in this chamber tomorrow which

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2 is pretty exciting. To Council Member Treyger's point
3 I, I think your point about the need to pay attention
4 to our residential... our planning, our zoning is a
5 really critical one, HPD is actually looking at some
6 of these fair housing questions, I know our friends
7 from the Furman Center in the audience and we've got
8 to focus on that, the Center for New York City
9 Affairs noted that the sharpest discrepancies between
10 the demographics of schools and their surrounding
11 attendance zones are in some of those gentrifying
12 neighborhoods that we are, you know involved in
13 zoning and planning on so I just... that's something we
14 really do need to make sure we're paying close
15 attention to. We got a lot of high school students in
16 the room, so I think we're going to hear about high
17 school shortly. The... leaving aside the selective
18 schools for a minute most of our high schools are
19 essentially assigned in one overall high school
20 assignment system, yes?

21 JOSH WALLACK: Yes.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: So, if we wanted
23 to have some model of controlled choice like we now
24 have in district one that attended to integration
25 across the totality of those schools as we're also

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2 assigning them based on all their other criteria we
3 could do that theoretically if we were willing to,
4 yes?

5 JOSH WALLACK: I think that the... so,
6 right now we have a citywide choice high school... a
7 high school choice system and we believe that choice
8 is powerful and important to many families and
9 students and it was a... it was a... an important move
10 that we made some years ago to give more students the
11 opportunity to select schools that appealed to them
12 and that helped them demonstrate their abilities and
13 talents. So, we have to be mindful of that and at the
14 same time we know there are challenges to it and that
15 that choice by itself has not produced the diverse
16 schools that we want. So, there are lots of options
17 that are available, and the citywide high school
18 choice system gives us some of those possibilities I
19 think we're committed to working with you and with
20 the Advisory Group to explore a range of them and see
21 what can be successful.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: So, I look
23 forward to hearing from high school students but it
24 seems to me just like in district one where you want
25 to have a choice, but you need to balance that with

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2 integration, you found a way to do it, we can do more
3 of that in our high schools and I was very pleased to
4 notice that Bard Queens, Council Member Torres was
5 talking about screen schools, Bard Queens which is
6 one of the most selective screen schools in the city
7 just joined the school... the, the diversity in
8 admissions program, if I read it right there
9 committing that 63 percent of students at Bard Queens
10 will be... will be low income, is that right?

11 JOSH WALLACK: That's correct.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: So, does it seem
13 like if Bard Queens, one of the most selective screen
14 schools in the city can commit to essentially
15 achieving, becoming racially and socioeconomically
16 representative we could have that ambition all across
17 our high school system?

18 JOSH WALLACK: We do think it's a, a
19 really powerful example, a powerful pilot and we're
20 looking forward to seeing how it plays out and
21 engaging in those conversations with those results
22 with others, yes.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: And my last
24 question, well I think... we don't have as many
25 elementary school students with us today in the room,

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2 I think I can see a path on high schools and I can
3 see a path on middle schools based on what we're
4 looking at in 15 and 13 but I don't want to let us
5 off the hook by just not owning that zoned elementary
6 schools in racially segregated city are going to
7 produce racially segregated elementary schools and so
8 far we don't have anything we're talking about that
9 will really seriously get at that, I don't have a
10 proposal to push you on, I don't have a question
11 about how we should do it but I don't want to let it
12 go unsaid either, all of this other stuff is good and
13 every time we make an integrated school work it, it
14 opens up hearts and minds and helps people see why
15 it's so compelling but also some point if we don't
16 get to looking at the challenge that zoned elementary
17 schools in a racially and economically segregated
18 city means the vast majority of our kids are in
19 racially and economically segregated elementary
20 schools then we don't deserve the title of having a
21 really bold and ambitious effort. So, I don't yet
22 have anything to ask but I hope you and that school
23 diversity Advisory Group take that seriously so when
24 we come back three years from now we're making some
25 progress there. Thank you... [cross-talk]

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2 JOSH WALLACK: We appreciate the point
3 and it is... it is one of the issues that we hope to
4 discuss as part of the Advisory Group, it, it is...
5 it's extremely challenging but we do have some
6 elementary schools that have participated in the
7 Diversity in Admissions pilots and we're learning
8 from those and hope that there's some powerful
9 examples there of ways forward.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you,
12 Council Member Mendez has a question on her
13 legislation that she'd like to ask.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: Hello. Thank you.
15 I've introduced Intro Number 1604, there are several
16 components to it, one is data collection that this
17 committee has done previously so this is just going
18 to expand on it a little bit, there's also a training
19 component as well as changing city forms to have a
20 check off on gender pronouns and I was hoping you can
21 make some comment on the record as to the efficacy of
22 such legislation and what if any administrative
23 burdens there might be in implementing it and how
24 could we get this done administratively and how much
25 time might be needed to do it properly?

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CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay and before you start to answer that I just need you to state your name for the record and I need to swear you in.

JOSHUA SIDIS: Absolutely, my name Joshua Sidis, I'm the Senior Advisor with the Mayor's Office of Operations.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay and would you please raise your right hand, do you solemnly swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth and to answer Council Member questions honestly?

JOSHUA SIDIS: I do.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

JOSHUA SIDIS: Yep. So, I'm here today to talk about Intro 1604-A and I think that introduction reflects the long negotiations about three years we've been negotiating and, so I think we are... the bill as it currently stands is for the Mayor's Office of Operations to collect pronoun information and do a survey and that is... I'm sorry, and do... just collect... continue to collect pronoun information.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you very much, anything to add to that?

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2 JOSHUA SIDIS: Yep and we are looking
3 forward to continuing and finishing up the
4 negotiations with you.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, okay. Now
6 we're going to go to Council Member Rose.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you. I just
8 want to... quick follow up question about the DREAM
9 program. Do you know how many students of, of color
10 would like to get into the program but cannot, I
11 guess you might be able to cull that from a waiting
12 list and, and what would it cost to be able to afford
13 that program to all of the, the schools, all of the
14 students that would want to participate?

15 LASHAWN ROBINSON: I... sorry. I can
16 certainly get you the details about the wait list and
17 also about fiscal resources that would be required
18 but I do want to share that over 90 percent of the
19 DREAM students sit for the Specialized High Schools
20 Admissions Test and the six percent is just
21 referencing the percentage of black and Hispanic
22 testers from DREAM compared to black and Hispanic
23 testers citywide. So, we're actually outperforming
24 other students that are outside of DREAM, the DREAM
25 program. So, we believe that we have a model that

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2 we're trying to build upon and we've made significant
3 gains in doubling the seats over the last two years
4 and we know we have a lot more work to do and we're
5 committed to doing the work so I apologize if I
6 wasn't clear in my first communication about it but
7 more than 90 percent of our students actually sit for
8 the test and our seats remain full, we do back... go
9 back to the wait list to make sure that those seats
10 are full.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Okay, I, I think we
12 need to have an offline conversation... [cross-talk]

13 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Absolutely, I, I would
14 love to... [cross-talk]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: ...but I, I really
16 would like for you to get back to me with what it
17 would cost to be able to extend this program..

18 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Absolutely.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Okay... [cross-talk]

20 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Absolutely.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: My other question
22 is, you know for me diversity isn't only in terms of,
23 of the student body but faculty and staff and in my
24 district, district 31 there's few black and Latino
25 teachers, faculty and staff and it is truly

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2 disproportionate to the, the break... the demographics
3 of my community so do you have a, a breakdown of
4 faculty and staff by gender and ethnic breakdown by
5 school district and citywide?

6 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Yes.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Yes, okay. And if
8 this... if this information exists is it being used in,
9 in your conversation about segregation, equality and
10 access?

11 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Yes, as part of the
12 Equity and Excellence agenda we also recognize that
13 diversity extends to the teaching core and the
14 leadership core across the city. We recently
15 implemented NYC Men Teach to ensure that there are
16 more men of color in the front of classrooms, we know
17 that we have 43 percent of our students who are young
18 boys of color and less than eight percent of our
19 teaching cores are representative of that population.
20 So, we set a target to have 1,000 men of color in
21 front of classrooms by fall of 2018, I believe we're
22 about at 900 teachers of color... men of color towards
23 that goal and we will continue to work to hit the
24 goal of 1,000. So, we recognize that diversity
25 extends to the leadership tentative of culturally

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responsive education is also ensuring that students see themselves in the leadership in the... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Absolutely... [cross-talk]

LASHAWN ROBINSON: ...school, it's about making sure that there are strong role models and we agree that diversity and teaching is important as well.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: So, is that data made available or is it reported out in any reports that are available to the public.

LASHAWN ROBINSON: I can get back to you on that but we, we... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Okay... [cross-talk]

LASHAWN ROBINSON: ...do have the data.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Okay, I would... [cross-talk]

LASHAWN ROBINSON: I don't know if it's made... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: ...like to... [cross-talk]

LASHAWN ROBINSON: ...public... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Because I think it should be made public, thank you.

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LASHAWN ROBINSON: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Alright, very good. I think we're going to stop here now with the administration, I deeply appreciate you coming in to discuss this issue. Obviously, there are many, many more questions that remain, we look forward to continuing to work with you on this issue and thank you very much for coming in, thank you... [cross-talk]

JOSH WALLACK: Thank you so much... [cross-talk]

LASHAWN ROBINSON: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, I'm told I have to remind everybody three minutes to this panel although highly respected people are going to be on this panel. Janella Hinds from the UFT, Vice President for High Schools; Matthew Gonzales, Appleseed; Nicole Mader, I believe the Center for New York City Affairs; Richard Kahlenberg, the Century Foundation; Kimberly Quick, the Century Foundation and that's our panel, the next panel. Alright, let me ask the... this panel to please raise your right hand so I can swear you all in, do you solemnly swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing

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2 but the truth and to answer Council Member questions
3 honestly?

4 JANELLA HINDS: Yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, and let's start
6 with Miss Hinds.

7 JANELLA HINDS: Good afternoon Chairman
8 Dromm and Council Member Lander it's good to see you.
9 My name is Janella Hinds and I am the Vice President
10 for Academic High Schools for the United Federation
11 of Teacher and Chairman Dromm we deeply appreciate
12 your oversight over the impact of New York City's
13 recent diversity plan called Equity and Excellence
14 for All. Of course, we value your committee's call
15 for greater accountability from the Department of
16 Education. And from the outset let's all agree that
17 the degrees of segregation reflected in New York
18 City's public schools are disturbing. They just
19 released the independent budget office's report
20 confirming that despite some of the progress that the
21 city students had made on test results and graduation
22 rates overall, the ratio and gender achievement gaps
23 persist. And so, I have already submitted
24 documentation for our written testimony, but I will
25 just make three very quick points. We acknowledge

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2 that the Department of Education is moving forward on
3 these issues that the school diversity Advisory Group
4 will be meeting on Monday and bringing together
5 groups of people to talk about these issues and
6 actually building on AP for All, building on the, the
7 efforts that have been made around admissions, those
8 are good steps to make but we realize that for the
9 1,700 schools that exist in New York City we really
10 are just moving around the edges. The second point
11 I'd like to make is that members of the UFT have used
12 our collective bargaining agreement to try to make
13 some efforts around these issues. We can talk about
14 the UFT's PROSE program which stands for Progressive
15 Redesign Opportunity Schools for Excellence that was
16 included in our 2014 contract with the Department of
17 Education and it allows in the most collaborative
18 schools in New York City different ways for people to
19 innovate what schools look like and how they operate
20 and so... in 30 of our PROSE schools, these communities
21 have come together to really make integration in
22 admissions a reality for their school communities.
23 Schools such as the neighborhood school and the earth
24 school have made these kinds of efforts in district
25 one. I could also talk about how our members have

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2 used our, our school based option program
3 opportunities and our professional learning
4 opportunities to really think about how we can
5 partner on culturally responsive education and how we
6 can learn about the most successful ways to teach a
7 diversity of students that are in our classrooms. And
8 so, the third and final point I will make before I
9 wrap up is that we have to focus on the school
10 environment not just admissions. We... this plan speaks
11 a lot about admission's proposals and policies, but
12 we really do need to spend some time thinking about
13 how we best support students who are less represented
14 in these schools especially black and Latino students
15 and LGBTQ students to ensure that they have
16 supportive, respectful, encouraging school
17 communities so that they can be the most successful
18 students possible. Thank you so much.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you and if you
20 were in my class you would get an A because as soon
21 as that bell went off you knew. Thank you, next
22 please.

23 KIMBERLY QUICK: Hi, thank you for your
24 invitation to testify before the New York City
25 Council Committee on the Education's oversight

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2 hearing on diversity in New York City schools. I'm
3 heartened that these conversations around race,
4 equity and desegregation are a significant part of
5 New York City's commitment to expanding powerful and
6 effective educational opportunities for all students.
7 My name is Kimberly Quick and I'm a Policy Associate
8 at the Century Foundation, a non-profit think tank
9 with offices in New York City and in Washington DC.
10 There I research and write about educational equity
11 paying particular attention to the academic and civic
12 benefits of racial and socioeconomic integration and
13 the continuing work of creating just and inclusive
14 environments. My colleague will talk more deeply,
15 Richard Kahlenberg about the benefits of diversity,
16 I'll echo that. So, dozens of studies spanning fifty
17 years, document the benefits of socioeconomically and
18 racially diverse schools. Nationally, students in
19 integrated schools have higher average test scores
20 individually, they're more likely to enroll in
21 college, they have lower rates of bias and are more
22 comfortable with diversity, they feel more
23 satisfaction in schools, higher rates of self
24 confidence and have elevated problem solving and
25 critical thinking ability. In my written testimony I

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2 go a little bit more into the evidence face of this.
3 While it's critical to recognize and design policies
4 around the fact that school diversity is beneficial
5 for all children we must also acknowledge that
6 desegregation alone does not guarantee equity. Within
7 schools even those that are considered diverse
8 antiquated systems and practices to often preserve
9 segregation and I intend to discuss two of those
10 practices today; tracking and disciplinary
11 disparities. Tracking is the practice of designated
12 student... designating students for separate
13 educational opportunities or paths based presumably
14 on their educational performance as teens or younger.
15 Certainly not all schools in districts that
16 frequently use academic tracking to sort students are
17 bad actors, but the historical roots of the practice
18 suffer from classes and racist undertones. Schools
19 use tracking to ensure that wealthy students from
20 certain families were prepared for higher education
21 and gentleman's professions while others from working
22 class backgrounds were directed to coursework that
23 sought to prepare them for a skill or trade. As
24 courts began more rigorous enforcement of race based
25 school desegregation, tracking evolved into a means

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2 to prevent white flight from public schools from the
3 public-school system and maintain racial separation
4 on the classroom level. Today, tracking is the norm,
5 and evidence indicated that it is a major driver of
6 the pervasive achievement gap with one study
7 indicating that it accounts for 37 percent of the gap
8 between rich and poor students. Investigations into
9 tracking also reveal that its not always tightly
10 correlated to prior academic performance. In 2014,
11 parents filed complaints against a New Jersey
12 district, South Orange Maplewood after their young
13 black daughter was denied entry into an advanced
14 level math course despite having qualified grades and
15 test scores. After looking into the case
16 investigators found that not only was the child
17 prepared for this higher-level coursework, but her
18 case fit into a pattern of decision making that left
19 white students filling 73 percent of upper level math
20 courses while constituting only 44 percent of the
21 school's middle school population. Nationally, low
22 income and black and Hispanic children are less
23 likely to be recommended and enrolled in gifted and
24 talented programs as well. In New York City, the
25 implications of tracking are even more widespread as

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2 this practice occurs both within schools and between
3 them with entire schools designated for high
4 achievers. Some schools and districts have found
5 innovative ways to push back against this trend.
6 Stamford Public School System in Connecticut is
7 diverse, minority... majority minority and free and
8 reduced-price lunch eligible school district. In
9 2005, under the leadership of superintendent Josh
10 Starr, the district began a series of interventions
11 that began to dismantle the tracking system. Stamford
12 began teacher training programs to provide
13 instructors with tools for lesson differentiation,
14 eliminated ability grouping in elementary school
15 classes, replaced five rigid tracks in middle school
16 with two flexible ones that allowed for student
17 movement and created open access to honors and A, AP
18 courses in their high schools. From 2010 to 2000...
19 [cross-talk]

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: May I ask you to wrap
21 it up.

22 KIMBERLY QUICK: Sure. The, the
23 percentage of black and Hispanic students doubled,
24 and the achievement gaps closed. I can talk to you
25 more about some of Chicago's practices when dealing

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2 with whole school tracking and then I also since I'm
3 running out of time wanted to briefly point out that
4 disciplinary practices disproportionately negatively
5 affect students with special needs, black and brown
6 children and low-income children and I'm happy to
7 answer any further questions you have later about
8 practices that can help eliminate that.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you very
10 much, next please.

11 RICHARD KAHLENBERG: Alright. Here we go.
12 My name is Richard Kahlenberg, I'm a Senior Fellow at
13 the Century Foundation, I work with Kimberly and I
14 want to commend the members here for your leadership
15 on this important issue of school diversity. I've
16 been researching and writing about school integration
17 for more than two decades and I'm so excited about
18 the movement that's going on now in, in New York
19 City, it's really, really heartening. So, I'm also an
20 Executive on the Executive Committee of the New York
21 City School Diversity Advisory Group but I want to
22 make clear I'm just speaking on my own behalf not as
23 a member of that group. So, as Kimberly mentioned
24 there's more than a half of a century of research to
25 suggest that one of the very best things we can do

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2 for students is to give them a chance to attend
3 economically and racially integrated schools and in
4 the... my written testimony I lay out some of that
5 evidence which was... is, is well known to you. there
6 are, are I think two distinct benefits that should be
7 distinguished, there are the benefits to all students
8 from being in a diverse school, the benefits... those
9 benefits run in every direction but then there is
10 also a distinct harm that is associated with
11 concentrated poverty. We all know of, of high poverty
12 schools that work but on average economically mixed
13 schools are about 22 times as likely to be high
14 performing as, as high poverty schools. So, while
15 there's a social science consensus I would say that
16 integration is good for students, there's kind of a
17 political consensus that there's not much we can do
18 about it, that it's too, too hot to handle and I
19 think that's wrong and it's outdated as, as your
20 leader suggests. The Century Foundation has
21 identified 100 districts across the country that are
22 pursuing socioeconomic integration policies that also
23 produce racial integration and we have done case
24 studies of nine of these districts that we have that
25 we submitted along with our, our testimony. In, in

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2 the written testimony I outlined ten ideas for New
3 York City, I just will briefly highlight two. One is
4 that you're... clearly your selective schools are the
5 most egregious examples of segregated schools;
6 Chicago by contrast has provided a model for
7 producing economic and racial diversity in a way
8 that's legally palatable and I think that's something
9 that you may want to look at. And secondly, I want to
10 commend the Chair in particular for creating the LGBT
11 liaison for the Department of Education and I wonder
12 whether it might make sense to do something similar
13 with respect to school diversity given the, the
14 salient of that issue. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, we're looking at
16 some legislation here as well for our Chief Diversity
17 Officer so that's an idea that's been floated around
18 and I'm glad that you mentioned LGBT because its one
19 thing that I wrote down, are there any stories in
20 here about LGBT or... I'm glad you mentioned it but is
21 there anything in here as well?

22 RICHARD KAHLENBERG: I don't think
23 there's anything in those... in those case studies but
24 that's certainly an area for further research for,
25 for the Century Foundation.

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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, definitely
3 would love to follow up with you about that.

4 RICHARD KAHLENBERG: Uh-huh.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, next please.

6 NICOLE MADER: Good afternoon. My name is
7 Nicole Mader and I am the Senior Research Fellow at
8 the Center for New York City Affairs at the New
9 School. I also stand before you today as a proud
10 member of the Alliance for School Integration and
11 Desegregation. My research for the past few years has
12 focused on school segregation in New York City's
13 public elementary schools. Together with my colleague
14 Clara Hemphill, the Director of InsideSchools, we
15 seek to combine quantitative analysis with reporting
16 from over 15 years of visiting schools and helping
17 parents navigate the city's school system. So, what
18 have we learned about segregation in our city
19 schools? The city's elementary schools are even more
20 segregated than it's housing. We've already heard
21 today that housing segregation is the cause of school
22 segregation, but our 2015 analysis found hundreds of
23 schools that varied significantly from the racial and
24 socioeconomic compositions of the zones and the
25 districts they serve. This suggests that school

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2 choice also plays a role in school segregation. Only
3 68 percent of student's citywide attend their zoned
4 elementary school, the rest go to dual language or
5 gifted programs, charter and other un-zoned schools
6 or schools in other zones and districts. In the
7 Harlem portion of district three for example, only
8 one third of students attend their zoned elementary
9 school. The families who left were much more likely
10 to be higher income and white than those who stayed.
11 This combination of zones and school choice therefore
12 has allowed some schools to become enclaves of
13 privilege while others face increasing concentrations
14 of poverty and high student need. Segregation is
15 compounded at the middle and high school levels by
16 admission screens that admit students based on
17 attendance, behavior and academic performance. Just
18 eight percent of all middle schools across the city
19 have 60 percent of all the students who move onto
20 specialized high schools. Only one quarter of the
21 students at these selective middle schools are black
22 and Hispanic, whereas 75 percent of students at the
23 rest of the city's middle schools are black and
24 Hispanic. So, what can we do about this? Our research
25 in 80 elementary schools that have become more

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2 integrated over time identified many steps that
3 school leaders can take including recruiting diverse
4 families, making them feel welcome and empowered as
5 leaders and designing admission set asides around the
6 goal of sustaining diversity but working at the
7 school level alone will not solve this systemic
8 problem. District leaders, community advocates,
9 parents, students and other stakeholders need to work
10 collectively to find solution in their communities
11 like the new plan for balanced elementary admissions
12 in District one. And strong citywide leadership is
13 necessary to support their work, measure progress and
14 reform policies that extend beyond district
15 boundaries. The DOE's Diversity Plan does not go far
16 enough. As Chairman Dromm noted in his opening
17 remarks our analysis of the numeric goals set in that
18 plan found that the city can meet them without making
19 any policy changes simply because of demographic
20 shifts that are already occurring. The racially
21 representative goal for example is set so low that it
22 can be accomplished by moving only 1,112 students to
23 different schools. I've included our full report
24 critiquing the DOE's plan as part of my written
25 testimony. I also want to add the data currently

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2 required by the City Council's Diversity and
3 Accountability Act is not sufficient. This... the
4 council should amend the act to require published
5 data on all tracks or programs within schools
6 especially at screened middle and high school
7 programs, applicants to each program so we can
8 compare it to those who ultimately enroll, students
9 attending schools outside their zones not just those
10 who attend schools outside their districts, charter
11 schools and a more robust measure of socioeconomic
12 status than free or reduced lunch eligibility. The
13 city council should also commit to a vision for real
14 integration that extends beyond diversity to include
15 each of the 5 R's defined by the student activists of
16 Integrate NYC. Thank you for the opportunity to speak
17 to you today about this important and urgent topic.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much,
19 next please.

20 MATTHEW GONZALES: Good afternoon. My
21 name is Matt Gonzales, I'm Director of the School
22 Diversity Project for New York Appleseed, a non-
23 profit social justice center which advocates for
24 integrated schools in communities in New York City
25 and New York State. I'm also a member of the, the New

1
2 York City Alliance for School Integration and
3 Desegregation. I... and I also serve as the Policy
4 Coach for Integrate NYC who you'll be hearing from
5 very shortly. I'm happy to say that New York City has
6 finally taken some small steps to disrupt the
7 persistence of educational segregation in the city.
8 And while many in this room, myself included,
9 continue to feel that those steps have been largely
10 inadequate we must acknowledge a change in direction
11 and tone and on the issue of segregation. Before I
12 move on I do want to make a really important point
13 that as we're talking about segregation the
14 traditional way in which we've talked about it has
15 been to articulate that majority black and Latino
16 schools are somehow bad, there's, there... and, and I...
17 and, and, and I think we need to disrupt that
18 premise. There are concentrations and challenges that
19 are majority black and Latino schools experience but
20 I think when we're talking about segregation,
21 segregation we also need to talk about the... something
22 that Nicole mentioned which is really about the, the
23 use of mechanisms to create enclaves for white
24 privileged families in this city and those are the
25 most egregious acting behaviors of school segregation

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2 in New York city and so as we're thinking about
3 desegregation the, the movement of bodies and the
4 breaking up of monopolies, I think that's where we
5 really need to start to prioritize our effort and
6 that's where the, the diversity pilot initiative
7 could actually serve as a... as a valuable tool as long
8 as unfortunately the... some of the, the new schools
9 that were... that were included yesterday are... were not
10 held to a... an, an adequate standard for maintaining
11 and disrupting diversity.. or segregation. So, if
12 we're, we're allowing schools that, that... the
13 preserved screens, the preserved zones to set
14 standards that are at 12 percent set asides that is
15 wholly inadequate and somewhat offensive. So, moving
16 on New York Appleseed has long taken the position
17 that local communities must be the drivers and
18 designers of integration initiatives, but this has
19 never meant that the city leadership is absolved from
20 responsibility. As Council Member Lander suggested
21 and I will reiterate, there are things that the Mayor
22 can do with the stroke of a pen, the removal of
23 middle school screens across the, the city which are
24 mechanisms used to ensure that ten-year-old students
25 from the most privileged families are concentrated in

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2 these enclaves can be disrupted pretty much tomorrow.
3 As the city begins to take under, undertake
4 initiatives to propose school... to promote school
5 diversity we call on the Mayor and Chancellor to
6 commit to the five R's of, of integration. You will
7 hear more about that from the student panel as
8 defined by Integrate NYC. So, to capture the
9 educational benefits of diversity we must do more
10 than just move bodies, we must move resources, we
11 must move curriculum pedagogy and school cultures, we
12 must move discipline practices and we must move our
13 mindsets away from a multitiered educational system
14 with winners and losers only then will we be able to
15 do the work of uprooting racism and white supremacy
16 from our education system. This effort will require
17 real investments for the DOE but from this body as
18 well and, and very quickly I call on the members of
19 this committee of three of you... the two of you here
20 but please communicate with your colleagues and the
21 larger council to join us in educating yourselves,
22 the Mayor and the Chancellor on what the student's
23 divine as... define as real integration and you'll hear
24 more about that. Second is to invest your own time
25 and resources into supporting integration initiatives

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2 in your districts and at the local level because
3 that's where the hard work needs to be done. Lastly,
4 as Nicole was saying continue to refine and hold the
5 DOE responsible for, for producing the school
6 diversity accountability report as is articulated by
7 the law. I forgot to attach our memo, but I will
8 happily provide that with some details in there as
9 well. Thank you very much.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

11 A question for the Century Foundation, have you
12 advocated for multiple measure admission into
13 specialized high schools? I, I noticed in your
14 testimony you said that the specialized high schools
15 were particularly egregious in terms of the selection
16 process and I'm just curious to know if you've taken
17 a stand on that issue yet?

18 RICHARD KAHLENBERG: Yes, I should make
19 clear that the Century Foundation per se doesn't take
20 stands so... but we, we as, as fellows and policy
21 associates can make statements and... on our own and I,
22 I had a piece in the New York Times a couple of years
23 ago where I talked about the, the system in New York
24 City, to my knowledge it's the only place in the
25 entire country where schools base admissions on a

1
2 single test, I mean it's, it's unheard of, no college
3 would admit students that way and so what I suggested
4 in that op-ed was that we look at the Chicago plan
5 which I helped develop that, that looks at a number
6 of criteria and also considers the socioeconomic
7 status of the neighborhoods from which students come
8 as a way of creating economic and racial diversity.
9 In, in Chicago the, the leading school is about 50
10 percent African American and Latino compared to
11 Stuyvesant where I think the numbers along the lines
12 of three to five percent so, so, there are... there are
13 other ways to do it then, then in New York City.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And what about gifted
15 and talented, also in New York City we use a single
16 test admission for that, has the Century Foundation
17 said anything on that issue and do you have a
18 suggestion regarding that?

19 RICHARD KAHLENBERG: Yeah, I think that
20 anytime a school is basing a decision on a single
21 test it's making a mistake, it's losing out on lots
22 of students who may look less impressive on paper but
23 have overcome incredible odds and, and so it's, it's
24 not only a way to ensure segregation it's also a way
25

1
2 to make sure that you're not tapping into the talents
3 of, of all the students in, in the society.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Uh-huh...

5 KIMBERLY QUICK: And just to add a number
6 of school districts have found some success in
7 looking at the recommendation system and in doing
8 some universal screening of, of applicants to make
9 sure that biases aren't imbued and teachers or
10 parents that are making these recommendations for who
11 even gets an option to get tested.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: But also in test
13 there, there's some inherent bias there as well...

14 [cross-talk]

15 KIMBERLY QUICK: Oh of course, yeah.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Right, exactly...

17 [cross-talk]

18 KIMBERLY QUICK: Which is why that it's
19 not a perfect system... [cross-talk]

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Right... [cross-talk]

21 KIMBERLY QUICK: ...but there have... some
22 districts have seen some improvement.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Right. Miss Hinds
24 what's the UFT doing in terms of getting the word out
25 to teachers about the programs that you mentioned,

1
2 the possibility to use PROSE to change admission
3 processes into schools but just getting the word out
4 to teachers in general about some of the options that
5 are available?

6 JANELLA HINDS: We have a committee of
7 educators from the specialized high schools who are
8 engaging in conversations around how to make these
9 school communities the most supportive for their
10 students as well as expanding diversity.. the
11 discovery program in their schools, making sure that
12 there is as much access available to middle school
13 students who are interested in coming to the
14 specialized high schools. Through the PROSE
15 initiative we have been having discussions over the
16 past couple of years around the ways in which
17 educators could partner on these kinds of issues and
18 as I mentioned these issues and ideas have bubbled up
19 from the earth school, the neighborhood school and
20 other schools around the city from our members who
21 really want to see these changes implemented.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you.
23 Council Member Lander.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you Mr.
25 Chair, thanks to this panel for, for all your work

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2 and I thank Matt for, for your push at the end, I was
3 going to mention this earlier but in addition to
4 Richard Rothstein's Color of Law this summer I also
5 spent some time with Richard Reeves, Dream Hoarders,
6 you know which speaks to the ways and look I
7 represent Park Slope, I feel like we are highly
8 implicated in this, it's... you know it's why district
9 15 is second on that list. We've got to own up to
10 this collectively and, and look at it squarely. We're
11 moving in the direction where people are willing to
12 do that, which I think is a good sign and I am still
13 am not sure how to handle that balance of like
14 pushing for what's right with moving people along. I
15 think the district 15 process is really interesting
16 in part because we're, we're finding as much need to
17 do outreach in Sunset Park and Red Hook as in Park
18 Slope that moving people along is real work and we're
19 going to learn some things together about how to do
20 that well. Miss Hinds I want to thank you because I...
21 you know I was... I had forgotten some of our hearing a
22 couple of years ago, the, the six hours that we spent
23 on the specialized high schools which is partly why
24 we thought maybe this hearing we would focus on the
25 other 1,600 and 994 schools so that they didn't get

1
2 eaten there but... and I just do... I do want to flag for
3 people, no one thinks that's right, in this room we
4 want to do something about it, we can make decisions
5 here for the other 1,600... 994 schools, those seven
6 schools or whatever it is Albany controls the keys to
7 so folks who think it is wrong to make a difference
8 on the selective schools get our state legislators
9 and the governor focused on this as well, we've,
10 we've been pushing a lot here at the council, we've
11 got a long way to go, we need some, some partners
12 elsewhere. So, I would just urge others to focus on
13 that as well but the thing you said that I was most
14 excited about was the PROSE focus and, and I just
15 want to make sure we lift up the story, it was in
16 your, your written testimony but not your... what you
17 said for time of MS447. So, MS447 is a PROSE school,
18 a middle school in district 15 and because of PROSE
19 and the diversity of admissions program they have
20 changed their model, they were a screened middle
21 school that took the kids, you know academically by
22 their set of rankings from the top and were
23 considered one of the schools that was for top
24 achievers in district 15 and they have made the most
25 interesting move in the diversity of admissions... in

1
2 admissions program not only a set aside or a priority
3 for low income kids but to shift to becoming a school
4 that explicitly works to have a balance of achievers
5 across a range of metrics, it's a really powerful
6 example, it's just getting started but I want to
7 thank you for, for helping make that happen through
8 the PROSE program.

9 JANELLA HINDS: And thank you so much for
10 raising that school and that community, they have
11 benefited from grants that were offered by the
12 National Education Association one or our
13 international unions as well as the UFT to do the
14 work necessary to make that expansion possible and so
15 the educators in this school worked together in
16 professional learning opportunities to deal with the
17 culturally responsive education... educational
18 practices that were necessary to address the way that
19 educators were thinking about the students that they
20 taught and providing opportunities for the students
21 to, to be pushed academically. I think also we know
22 of a... they implemented a summer bridge program to
23 ensure that all students were prepared for the
24 transition from elementary school to middle school
25 and all of these creative ways of thinking about how

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2 to welcome students and families into their school
3 community were undertaken by the MS447 community to
4 think about how to break down barriers and create a
5 school community where all students can be
6 successful.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: I talked to some
8 of the teachers and the, the great principal Aaron
9 Rushner [sp?] about that summer bridge program and it
10 was pretty funny, they were, you know not sure what
11 they were going to get when they showed up and they
12 kind of then breathed a sigh of relief when they
13 started working with those kids, they were like this
14 is going to work okay. And I'll just underline, I
15 mean if that school which has been, which still is
16 today but which has been, you know a strong majority
17 wise, strong majority upper middle class perceived as
18 top achiever school in district 15 can become, you
19 know achievement socioeconomically and racially
20 diverse school then we could do that for every single
21 school in the... in the New York City system. So, we've
22 got to... I mean we got a lot of examples, I don't want
23 to only lean on one but, but it's one to watch and I
24 want to say thank you for it.

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JANELLA HINDS: We, we absolutely can, and can I just say really quickly I think to the point that has been raised over and over again today, there are talented students of all races in all communities in New York City and the assumption that the only students who can be successful are those who are high income or those who are white or those who live in particular neighborhoods is the one that we must dismantle together.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Amen. One very technical question that I think was raised in your testimony we... with the councils thrilled to have helped to go to universal free lunch so that all students in New York City could get free lunch but it, it makes even worse the problem of measuring student... the income of families for the purpose of achieving socioeconomic diversity, it already had it's flaws but at least we had some data on every... on every student and now for a good reason we have it less and less, what, what are people doing in other places if they're... if they have to... if they... we can't... you know anyway we got the constraints on using race as a result of parents involved in the other court decisions, we mostly lean on

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socioeconomic integration, what, what do people do to have the information that we need to, to proceed with that?

NICOLE MADER: I'll start by just saying that the, the free reduced lunch eligibility numbers are looked down on in most districts now because of the, the way that it is not a robust measure of socioeconomic status, the full range of income...
[cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Okay, so what are they using... [cross-talk]

NICOLE MADER: So... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: ...what's a good measure... [cross-talk]

NICOLE MADER: ...the DOE has developed the economic need in Next and that's been evolving over the last couple of years, I think it would be a good start for the city council's data to use that same number, but I think that that data also needs some work because it, it can't be used as an individual identifier for students because it's a composite number for the school. So, the DOE actually had a grant, an RFP or customer proposals for developing a new measure of student need and mobility and the

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2 Center for New York City Affairs was awarded that
3 grant and we have not gone through procurement in the
4 last two and a half years. Well the grant... we, we
5 found out we got the grant about six months ago and
6 we still haven't gotten that but applied two and a
7 half years ago.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Alright, so
9 let's... [cross-talk]

10 NICOLE MADER: So... [cross-talk]

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: ...just underline
12 this as something we need to follow up on because we
13 need a good measure if... [cross-talk]

14 NICOLE MADER: Exactly... [cross-talk]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: ...we're going to
16 use this in our... [cross-talk]

17 RICHARD KAHLENBERG: If I can just... I've,
18 I've, I've worked with the Charlotte Mecklenburg,
19 North Carolina school district on creating a
20 socioeconomic integration plan that, that relies on
21 two sets of data; one is the census data on the
22 neighborhoods from which districts... students come.
23 So, we look at a number of different factors;
24 parent's education, income, home ownership rates,
25 percentage of families who are single parent homes,

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2 percentage that are low achieving, those, those types
3 of factors are, are ones that you can, can look at.
4 The criticism of that approach is that you can have a
5 low-income family living in a middle-class
6 neighborhood, middle class family living in a low
7 income neighborhood and so Charlotte is going further
8 to ask people to provide within ranges their income
9 level and parental education level and there's a...
10 basically an incentive built into the choice system
11 so that if you don't answer the question you're
12 penalized so, so you... most, most of the parents have
13 reason to, to answer so the other thing I'd add there
14 is they define groups by high socioeconomic status,
15 medium socioeconomic status and low which is a huge
16 advantage over free and reduced lunch which tends to
17 be, you know either you're, you're in or you're out
18 of that category. So, I think there are lots of
19 experiments out there and, and we're making progress
20 on, on that issue.

21 MATTHEW GONZALES: Just to follow up a
22 little bit on Rick's point, so I, I had the, the, the
23 privilege of being a part of the district one working
24 group towards the, the last year and a half and so
25 while ultimately the, the, the plan that came out of

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2 that was more of a priority admissions system, one of
3 the early proposals that, that was requested was
4 using census track data and, and considering the use
5 of census track data or the use of census block data
6 so the Department of Education, you know responded to
7 these requests and designed some modeling around what
8 this would look like in district one, ultimately, you
9 know everyone moved forward with a different idea but
10 that.. the idea that, that, that we can utilize an
11 alternative measure for need exists and has been done
12 and has been modeled in this city and so I think as
13 we move towards a more universal lunch status for
14 everyone we certainly need to know that there are
15 other measures and know that the, the Department of
16 Education already has the capacity to utilize those
17 for need indexes.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well I'm going to
19 wrap it up here a little bit because I need to move
20 on but just to, to finish up, you know I represent
21 Jackson Heights and Queens and Elmhurst and I have
22 probably one of the most diverse districts in the
23 whole world and so diversity within the schools
24 itself based on race is, is not as visible as it
25 might be in other areas but where it is segregated is

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2 in economic so I have parents of higher economic
3 income who are choosing to go to either charters or
4 to G and T programs sometimes even over to Roosevelt
5 Island if they have to travel all that way to get
6 there because they're opting out of the local public
7 schools but... that's why I think these numbers are so
8 important for us to look at as well. So, I want to
9 thank this panel for coming in and we look forward to
10 continuing the discussion with you later on, thank
11 you. Okay, next we have a panel of students; Tazin
12 Azad from PS 217... a parent, I'm sorry, parent; Leanne
13 Nunes, Integrate NYC, student panel; Dekaila Wilson,
14 integrate; Aneth Naranjo, a student I believe, is she
15 here, yep; Helen Jamal, am I correct... Hebh, Hebh,
16 Council Member Lander knows her; Matthew Diaz, I'm
17 sorry and Amina from Integrate New York, I can't see
18 the... I can't see the last name, Fofana. Yes, we don't
19 teach it anymore. Professor Bloomfield would you come
20 up as well, so we can swear you in at this time
21 because I know you have a class. There... squeeze you
22 in there... yeah, uh-huh. Alright, if I could ask
23 everyone to raise their right hand, do you solemnly
24 swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth
25 and nothing but the truth and to answer Council

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2 Member questions honestly? Okay, Professor Bloomfield
3 and then we'll go to the, the students. Okay.

4 DAVID BLOOMFIELD: I apologize I'm going
5 to have to go teach apparently the next generation of
6 city council members. Thank you for this opportunity
7 to describe the shameful record of the De Blasio
8 Administration regarding diversity in student
9 enrollment and curriculum. In my written comments I
10 provide references to my oral testimony. Others at
11 this hearing will focus on the first of these
12 injustices, extreme racial and income segregation
13 that pervades our public schools. In a city limits
14 column, I called the Mayor's school diversity
15 initiative belatedly announced last June thin and
16 amateurish, lacking in urgency and imagination,
17 nothing has changed that view including what I heard
18 today. The Mayor's rhetoric in other areas such as
19 housing, worker's rights and policing recognizes that
20 social change begins with specific progressive social
21 policies. In education however, he echoes
22 segregationist arguments that social attitudes must
23 change first before school policies follow. His
24 shallow steps to appease diversity advocates lack
25 political courage and ignore research that

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2 segregation is a debilitating educational strategy
3 and that all students that stand to benefit by
4 destroying barriers to integration. The second
5 injustice is the denial of a diverse curriculum to
6 ultraorthodox yeshiva students contrary to state law.
7 As I describe in another column, the Department of
8 education under the Mayor's control has an
9 affirmative duty to assure that educational standards
10 in these yeshivas are substantially equivalent to
11 required learning standards in public schools,
12 including English language arts, science,
13 mathematics, technology, social studies and the arts.
14 The Mayor has failed miserably in meetings this duty
15 surrendering to political pressures that cripple the
16 education of thousands of students. Personally, I
17 believe this constitutes both Official Misconduct and
18 Obstruction of Governmental Administration under
19 Penal Law Article 195, a matter for this Body and the
20 Department of Investigation to refer to the District
21 Attorney, since the documented, even admitted failure
22 to provide adequate secular studies in these
23 institutions and the Mayor's apparent sabotage of
24 this requirement constitutes in my opinion a, a
25 serious legal, ethical, and educational violation. I

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2 realize I have just accused the Mayor of a crime, an
3 extension of his overall disregard for diversity
4 strategies that can bring real change. The Mayor
5 self-advertises as the education Mayor but without
6 real progress on desegregation and the education of
7 thousands of ultraorthodox yeshiva students, that
8 legacy will forever elude him. Thank you, I would be
9 happy to answer any questions.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much
11 and on the yeshiva issue we have referred that over
12 to both DOI and to the Department of Education for
13 further investigation.

14 DAVID BLOOMFIELD: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Let's,
16 let's go to the students now. I'm sorry, let's... Tazin
17 Azad first.

18 TAZIN AZAD: Thank you everybody from...
19 for this opportunity and I'm wholly impressed with
20 the student body among whom I'm sitting to right now
21 and my name is Tazin Azad and I'm a parent of two
22 district 22 students at PS 217 and MS 890. I am also
23 a Parent Association member and a Title One Committee
24 member at those schools. Thank you all for
25 recognizing the reality of segregation in our school

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2 systems and the inadequate recognition, recognition
3 of diversity. I'm here to introduce Parent
4 Association/Parents Organizations/Parent Teachers
5 Associations as a viable tool to rectify this issue.
6 I believe the success of desegregation of our schools
7 and integration of diversity is closely correlated to
8 how well acquainted and integrated parent's
9 organizations will be to this process. Parents
10 Associations can achieve this by being instrumental
11 in two ways; serving to promote communication with
12 the parent body and then to serving to promote
13 communication with the community at large. As it... as
14 it is evident by the testimony of the DOE we see that
15 not all districts are having the same focus so it,
16 it'd be a great effort for... to... schools to do this
17 within themselves. Just to give a little bit of
18 background, PS 217 meets all the trademarks of a
19 diverse school. The student body consists of more
20 than two dozen languages and dialect speakers, from
21 an array of different ethnicities and socioeconomic
22 statuses. Unfortunately, the school's educational
23 experience and its parent's association did not
24 emulate that diversity. The academics and parent
25 involvement that have been disproportionately

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2 represented by the white population, while non-white
3 community consistently sustained average or below
4 grade ELA, math scores and minimal integration.
5 Growing distrust over unsatisfactory response from
6 the school resulted in parents convening in what we
7 call the Community Engagement Committee. The sole
8 purpose of this committee was to address the, the
9 silent segregation of our student body and
10 underrepresented, represented diversity in PS 217.
11 Within a few years of targeted effort by parents to
12 communicate effectively to all parents in our schools
13 has now resulted in what we are proud to call as
14 truly a diverse school where migrant families and
15 families of color are involved in leadership roles
16 and are actively instilling their perspectives into
17 educational experiences of PS 217. To encourage
18 diversity in our schools, proper representation of
19 all constituents must be attained, PA's can make sure
20 that, that every family is welcomed into a respectful
21 atmosphere where they can share perspectives and
22 culture. This means to accommodate families by
23 providing services in preferred language other than
24 English, time, location and I would add method. DOE,
25 I think mentioned that they were trying to digitize

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2 much of the information online and I would like to
3 point out that doing this will sort of exclude
4 families of ELL who are not accustomed to online. So,
5 just to continue, parent's association can discover
6 this aspect by understanding the nuances of culture
7 through one... on one... conversations by having language
8 liaisons from parent's body, surveys etcetera in our
9 particular... in, in our particular school identifying
10 leaders within language clusters who spoke both
11 English and another particular language who were able
12 to deliver information in that language be it spoken
13 or written created invaluable and long lasting
14 connections to families who were previously
15 uninterested. Hearing native languages at major
16 events coupled with more intimate language
17 breakfasts, sudden increased parent participation by
18 many folds. Furthermore, actively recruiting parents
19 of diverse backgrounds to fill, fill positions of
20 decision making bodies such as executive body SLTCC
21 etcetera will increase the likelihood of discussion
22 of matters that are relevant to all groups of parents
23 not just a vocal few. As the school administration
24 receives input from well represented PAs they will be
25 more encouraged to respond accordingly to meet the

1
2 needs of all students equally. A resilient propellent
3 of school segregation is school isolation. This
4 happens when lack of communication between
5 neighboring schools give rise to individualized
6 communities. Segregation adversely affects
7 communities of color and those that are comprised of
8 immigrant families while economically stratified are
9 well connected school communities have access to
10 latest resources reap the benefits from move.. by
11 moving quickly to implement them into their
12 children's educational experience while marginalized
13 communities suffer stagnation because of the lack of
14 the access of the very same resources. P.. [cross-
15 talk]

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Can you wrap it up a
17 little?

18 TAZIN AZAD: Yes. So, PA could
19 essentially act as the distributors of these..
20 information to each individualized school and then
21 adjacent schools and then the community at large. I
22 would like to say that the knowledge of existence of
23 councils like this, an organization like this was.. is
24 largely.. [cross-talk]

25 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay.. [cross-talk]

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2 TAZIN AZAD: ...not distributed to local
3 parents and in... [cross-talk]

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay... [cross-talk]

5 TAZIN AZAD: ...communities I would say if
6 there would be a way to distribute this, this type of
7 information and the existence of these communities I
8 think parents will be able to move towards to make
9 schools much more less segregated and diverse with...
10 by themselves. Thank you everybody.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay and I'm told I
12 have... must be strict because I have to... we... right, we
13 have ten more panels so I, I hate to... I'm not being
14 mean to anybody, but we need to try to stick to that,
15 that three-minute rule and I must step outside for
16 one minute so Council Member Lander would you take
17 over for me? Yeah, thank you.

18 HEBH JAMAL: Hello everyone. my name is
19 Hebh Jamal and I am the Director of Public Relations
20 and Chair of the Race and Enrollment Committee for
21 Integrate New York City. I'm also the Youth Policy
22 Fellow for New York Appleseed. Integrate New York
23 City stands for the five R's of real integration;
24 resources, race and enrollment, representation,
25 restorative justice and relationships. Historically,

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2 the integration movement since Brown versus the Board
3 of Education has been defined as the movement of
4 bodies to reach quotas of diversity. Since then
5 America has dissolved itself from de jure segregation
6 but it is no surprise that de facto segregation
7 persists to bring us to the reality of today; that
8 New York City has one of the most segregated school
9 systems in the country. As a New York City high
10 school alumnus, I can attest to my experience that
11 school segregation alienates and excludes students
12 from receiving a sound basic education that the DOE
13 promises. It does not grant the 1.1 million students
14 the diverse learning environment that can be possible
15 and further perpetuates the criminalization of black
16 and Latino students. From metal detectors to the
17 disproportionate suspension rate of students of color
18 versus their white classmates to the commodification
19 of our education that allows for New York City to
20 have the most competitive high school application
21 process, I urge you to take action in order to reach
22 educational excellence for all students. Although
23 acknowledging that true integration is the
24 achievement of all of the 5 aforementioned R's, I'm
25 here to speak on behalf of the Race and Enrollment

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2 committee. Integrate New York City would like to
3 propose that the DOE adopt an alternative admissions
4 algorithm for selective high schools or screen
5 schools that takes into account demographics of
6 diversity. Such an algorithm would increase the
7 opportunity for students with specific demographics
8 such as income levels, geographical location, or
9 whether or not they're an English Language Learner.
10 The idea is to be able to create autonomy within the
11 algorithm so that you can shift the demographics
12 depending on what the school is lacking in
13 representation. In our efforts to develop this
14 algorithm, we were faced with many difficulties; one
15 of them is the lack of transparency, documentation,
16 and understanding of the applicant pool. Who is
17 applying to which school and why? In order to have a
18 beneficial conversation about integration and
19 diversity, you have to first understand who's
20 applying where. We hope to see this data included in
21 the next iteration of the School Diversity
22 Accountability Report. We call on the Mayor and this
23 council to commit to the 5 R's of real integration as
24 they do diversity work, and to develop further data
25 that opens the conversation beyond current quotas,

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2 and attempt to amend the current application process
3 that just further perpetuates segregation in New York
4 City schools. Thank you.

5 MATTHEW DIAZ: Alright. Hello, my name is
6 Matthew Diaz. I am a junior in high school, a Youth
7 Director of National Outreach and represent the
8 Resource Allocation committee for Integrate NYC.
9 Also, I represent Puerto Ricans and Latinos youth.
10 Integrate NYC stands for the five R's of real
11 integration; resource equity, race and enrollment,
12 representation, restorative justice and
13 relationships. Access to schools offering a sound
14 basic education is a legal right of every student in
15 NY... in NYC and it is essential to achieving real
16 integration. According to the research conducted by
17 the Fair Play Coalition, over 17,000 students of
18 color do not have a... access to sports teams year-
19 round. Sports teams are an... are an important resource
20 for students. They provide leadership development,
21 team building and opportunities for college
22 scholarships. Sports teams are just one piece of a
23 sound basic education that students in segregated
24 school do not have full access to. Because of this
25 fact, we developed the Resource Allocation Committee

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2 and included it in the five R's of real integration.
3 Integrate NYC stands for... Integrate NYC stands with
4 organizations like the Alliance of Quality Education,
5 the Center for Educational Equity and the Coalition
6 for Educational Justice who have long called for
7 equitable funding and resources to all New York
8 schools. Without full investments in each of our
9 schools, efforts for diversity fall flat. We call on
10 the Mayor and this Council to ensure that all schools
11 follow the law, and provide qualified teachers, up to
12 date curricula, expanded programming, appropriate
13 class sizes, up to date books, supplies, libraries,
14 technologies and laboratories. We call on the Mayor
15 and this Council to commit to the five R's of real
16 integration as they do diversity work and follow
17 through in... on commitments to ensure each school in
18 the NYC provides a diverse and equitable educational
19 opportunity for 1.1 million students. We look forward
20 to representing the youth student... the youth... no, we
21 look forward to representing the voice of students
22 and the five R's of real integration as member of the
23 School Diversity Advisory Group. Thank you.

24 LEANNE NUNES: Alright. Good afternoon,
25 my name is Leanne Nunes and I am a sophomore, also

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2 I'm the Director of Equity and I represent the
3 Representation Committee for Integrate NYC.
4 Representation is one of the five R's that were
5 previously mentioned and integrates desegregation and
6 policy for New York City schools. The other five R's
7 are; Race and Enrollment, Resource Allocation,
8 Relationships and Restorative Justice. Together these
9 policies push for integration and better quality of
10 education for all 1.1 million students that attend
11 New York City public schools. The Representation
12 Committee is responsible for ensuring the
13 diversification, inclusion and voice of teachers,
14 faculty and board members of color in classrooms,
15 school buildings and throughout the entirety of the
16 school system. Across New York, nearly half of all
17 white students throughout the... across New York nearly
18 half of all white students about 48 percent or more
19 than 560,000 white students are enrolled in schools
20 without a single Latino or black teacher. Eighty four
21 percent of white students, more than 977,000 students
22 attend schools without a single Latino or black
23 principal or assistant principal. Latino and black
24 students outside of big five school districts and
25 nearly... are nearly 13 times more likely than their

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2 big five piers to have no exposure to a same race or
3 ethnicity teacher. When schools and classrooms in
4 particular lack the representation of people of color
5 misrepresentation of these groups and a deficit of
6 knowledge and understanding of these groups and their
7 cultures develop leading to racial, ethnic and
8 cultural boundaries made in schools amongst students
9 and teachers. Teachers are meant to be the windows
10 and mirrors for growing minds to show them the world
11 of possibilities that lies beyond and within them.
12 students of color missing the opportunity to see
13 themselves and those who enter the call to help mold
14 the next generation. We would like to call on the
15 Mayor and this Council to commit to the five R's of
16 real integration as they do diversity work to
17 remember to not only fill positions with people of
18 color that can accurately, accurately reflect the
19 student body with majority students of color but also
20 include more teachers of color in majority white
21 schools ensuring that they have a voice in the
22 system. We would also like to call for a curriculum
23 that accurately recounts stories about or containing
24 people of color without a white lens or perspective.
25 This would solidify a more well rounded and truthful

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2 education for all students that more fairly
3 represents people of color of the past, present and
4 future. Thank you.

5 ANETH NARANJO: Hi, my name is Aneth
6 Naranjo, I'm the Director of Youth Engagement and I
7 represent the relationships committee for Integrate
8 NYC. Integrate NYC stands for the five R's of real
9 integration; resources, race and enrollment,
10 representation, restorative justice, and
11 relationships. Building strong relationships across
12 group identities in schools is a crucial part to
13 achieving real integration. Each day, 1.1 million
14 students are expected to go to school and learn the
15 material presented to them but often they can't
16 concentrate on the work because they don't feel safe
17 in their own schools. We need educators and spaces
18 who can address the internal and external trauma
19 students bring into the classroom. Too often we hear
20 about students being attacked for their identity both
21 physically and mentally. Swastikas are being drawn on
22 tables, white power is being screamed down hallways,
23 the word racism is being googled to defend a racist
24 comment made by a teacher and students don't feel
25 safe. These are just a few examples of what I

1
2 experienced in my own high school and my experiences
3 are not uncommon. These are clear indications of an
4 education system plagued with racism and white
5 supremacy. This is why we believe diversity
6 initiatives that do not include investments in
7 cultural competency training for teachers and staff
8 are insufficient. Integrate NYC stands with the
9 Coalition for Educational Justice in calling for
10 mandatory professional development and, and courses
11 on culturally responsive education for all NYC
12 teachers, staff, PTA and students. These actions
13 coupled with pro-diversity initiatives would ensure
14 all 1.1 million students have access to diverse,
15 equitable, and inclusive schools. We call on the
16 Mayor and this Council to commit to the five R's of
17 real integration as they do diversity, diversity work
18 and follow through on committees to invest in
19 cultural competency and anti-bias training for
20 teachers. Students demand diverse and equitable
21 schools. Students demand to have a voice in the
22 decision making that affects the quality of their
23 education. We are here to represent their voice as
24 these initiatives take shape. Thank you.

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DEKAILA WILSON: Hello everyone. My name is Dekaila Wilson. Before I even start my testimony I just want to tell you guys a little joke that I had before coming inside the hearing. My colleague and I Leanne right there, we were just so amazed, like so flabbergasted as to how the New York City Hall has less rigorous security than our high school. I'm... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: We have been fighting on that issue as well, so I want you to know that we, we stand with you on that issue.

DEKAILA WILSON: Thank you. Thank you, it's nice to know I have important people supporting me. I'm a senior in high school, I am the Director of Decriminalization and I am the Chair of the Restorative Justice Committee for Integrate NYC. Integrate NYC stands for the five R's of real integration; restorative justice, resource equity, race and enrollment, representation, and relationships. We believe real integration requires the adoption of discipline policy that do not criminalize black and Latino students and that disrupt the school to prison pipeline. According to a report by the New York Civil, Civil Liberties Union,

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2 99 percent of all students handcuffed in New York
3 City schools in 2016 were black and Hispanic. Because
4 of data points like this one, which can be easily
5 found on the internet, we created the Restorative
6 Justice Committee as a point in our five-point
7 platform. As a student in the public, public school
8 system in New York I have witnessed this quotation
9 come to life. As the city begins to invest in
10 diversity initiatives, we insist that they are
11 coupled with funding and implementation of district
12 wide restorative justice approaches to discipline,
13 including guidance interventions, instead of
14 suspensions. We must begin to invest in our students,
15 not officers. We need more social workers, not more
16 officers. We call on the Mayor and the City to commit
17 to the five R's real integration and will continue to
18 represent the voices of the students in this process.
19 Thank you.

20 AMINA FOFANA: Good afternoon, my name is
21 Amina Fofana, I'm an alumnus at... from district seven.
22 I represent Integrate NYC for me, I'm the Creative
23 Director and the lead... committee lead for... lead
24 council. These shirts that you see, the sea of pink
25 in the crowd is from... is... was inspired by Elizabeth

1
2 Eckford. My, my colleague Dasia [sp?] and Iman Abdul
3 created this to honor the 60th anniversary of The
4 Little Rock Nine. Elizabeth Eckford, Eckford was one
5 of the students that were... made efforts at Little
6 Rock Nine to integrate a school in Arkansas. Okay..
7 Eckford wore glasses to mask her tears, the
8 sunglasses were a symbol of fearlessness and
9 strength. This year is... oh I'm sorry. Today New York
10 City schools are the most segregated in the country.
11 The Brown versus Board of Ed case made school
12 segregation illegal and efforts to integrate were
13 encouraged but here we are. Our nation's public-
14 school system has the... since then failed to deliver
15 an integrated basic sound... and sound education,
16 institutionalizing separate but equal. For over 60
17 years the system... the school system hasn't been doing
18 its job and because of that there is a racial
19 achievement gap. Excuse me... where did real
20 integration come from? The idea real... of real
21 integration from student... comes from students
22 changing a conversation about equality to equity. We
23 don't want to give people resources and opportunities
24 to adjust to barriers like separation and
25 socioeconomic disadvantages. We want to provide

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2 equitable resources. Equity is how we remove the
3 barriers. Sorry. Why the sunglasses? The sunglasses
4 as I've said before were a symbol of strength and
5 fearlessness to... that Eckford... excuse me. Eckford
6 wore the sunglasses to represent fearlessness and
7 strength. She walked through an angry mob of white
8 segregationists, so she could fight for integration
9 on her first day of school. Today we are here strong
10 and fearless, fighting for integration. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Very good, I wondered
12 from the beginning what the sunglasses were about. I
13 did, I asked my Legal Counsel I said what are the
14 sunglasses about. All well done, and I heard you even
15 though I was outside, the, the microphone goes and
16 follows us. So, I could hear what you were saying.
17 I'm curious to know if there are any GSA's in the
18 schools in which you students attend, do you know
19 what a GSA is, yes?

20 LEANNE NUNES: Yes, I am a part of the
21 GSA in the school that I attend and it's a very
22 active force in making attempts to change the school
23 culture in making it more safe not just for LBGTQ IA
24 students but also around making sure racial and
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1
2 ethnic attitudes in the school are positive as well
3 and students feel safe.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: That's great and you
5 know I missed the press conference out on the steps
6 before the... before this hearing and I know that CEJ
7 has been fighting for culture responsive education in
8 the schools and I really think a big part of that is
9 for LGBT students as well and the intersection of
10 sexual orientation, race, religion, etcetera, so
11 forth and so on. So, I'm glad that you know what a
12 GSA is, Gender Sexuality Alliance or Gay Straight
13 Alliance, good. Council Member anything?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you guys
15 for being here and I'll be back tomorrow afternoon
16 for those of you that are here as well and I... be...
17 given how many more people are to testify I'm not
18 going to ask the many questions I have but I've had
19 the great opportunity to sit with you a lot of
20 Integrate NYC for meetings and I look forward to the
21 next ones and those of you that are going to be on
22 the school diversity Advisory Group you see you've
23 got your work cut out for you to keep pushing so...
24 [cross-talk]

25 HEBH JAMAL: Brad if I... [cross-talk]

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COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: ...thank you...

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[cross-talk]

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HEBH JAMAL: ...could just say one last...

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one last thing, if anyone... if you guys... you know a

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lot of things are thrown out of... thrown out right

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here but if you really got one thing out of the panel

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of students is in order to achieve real integration

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is to have... to adopt the framework that students have

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put together because it doesn't just cover one

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specific part that we discussed it also covers

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cultural responsive education and it covers the

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assignment of students so whenever we talk about

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integration when the DOE comes up here we constantly

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hear oh the assignment of students, student bodies,

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moving student bodies, that conversation's very

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traumatic for black and brown parent, parents so we

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have to really take into consideration that this

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framework is very important and if you want to really

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achieve true integration the DOE would consider

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adopting it so thank you.

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COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: And I'll just say

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one... you know one more thing because with a few of

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you... you know probably... we had the rally last spring

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but I guess I do want to say this to all of us

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2 because I think in this room it is easy to feel like
3 this issue is very clear cut and the work we have to
4 do is so powerful and the speed at which we're doing
5 it is so slow, you know we have a lot of work to do
6 to persuade many, many more New Yorkers about how
7 that is, that rally of 75 or 100 people is probably
8 the largest rally that has taken place to do
9 something about our segregated schools in the last
10 couple of decades in New York City. So, I just... I
11 don't want... I mean you guys are building that
12 movement and we're honored to be a part of it but it
13 is on all of us to build it a lot bigger and I think
14 you're right that that takes having a framework that
15 works for everybody to be a part of and doesn't sort
16 of assume old, old language and old barriers and I
17 feel inspired by what you guys are doing but what
18 it's going to take to get the change we need is a
19 movement a whole lot bigger than the one we already
20 have. So, thank you for starting to build it.

21 HEBH JAMAL: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you to
23 this panel, we appreciate it. Alright, our next panel
24 would be Taylor McGraw from Teens Take Charge;
25 Jederick Estrella, Teens Take Charge; Dulce Marquez,

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Teens Take Charge; Nelson Luna, Teens Take Charge;
Whitney Stephenson, Teens Take Charge; Nusi
Olumegbon?

NUSI OLUMEGBON: Olumegbon.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Olumegbon? Oh
Olumegbon, Olumegbon?

NUSI OLUMEGBON: Olumegbon.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very...
Olumegbon.

NUSI OLUMEGBON: No problem.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And Muhammad Deen.
And I just want to see if, if these folks are still
here; Randi Levine, Advocates for Children, yeah,
Camillia Brown, oh she... okay. Just trying to get a
feel for who's here. Now I'm not calling you I just
want to know if you're still here, okay, you don't...
yeah, Melissa Iachan, Iachan, yeah, okay. Sorry,
about that. Lori Podvesker, okay. Alright, okay we
see you up there, alright, Maria Gil, Maria... okay.
Alright, next panel. Okay, very good, can I ask you
to raise your right hand please? Do you solemnly
swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth
and nothing but the truth and to answer Council
Member questions honestly?

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[panel affirms]

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CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, where should we start? Okay, very good.

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TAYLOR MCGRAW: Thank you for the opportunity.. [cross-talk]

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CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Just turn that mic on, the red light.

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TAYLOR MCGRAW: Got it. Thank you for the opportunity to testify this afternoon. My name is Taylor McGraw, I host a podcast about school segregation called The Bell and I facilitate a group called Teens Take Charge that fights for educational equity alongside Integrate NYC and other courageous student leaders. Before I start I just want to say for the record that I'm a little disappointed that the seats in front of us are less full than the seats behind us and I hope that we can find another forum to make sure that the right people and the right ears are hearing the messages that these students have so, I just wanted to note that.

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CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Just on that note let me say sometimes Council Members especially at this time of year are pulled between other hearings, I don't know if you were here when... in the beginning

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2 and I had to go to one room and come back and go...
3 it's the time of year but they... we'll, we'll break,
4 break this down to them as well when we meet as the
5 committee outside of here so I wish some more would
6 stay as well but they will get the... what you're
7 saying and we take it very, very seriously.

8 TAYLOR MCGRAW: Thank you, thank you for
9 that. So, I used to teach history and I want to start
10 there. July 24th, 1956 the New York Times front page
11 headline read, "City's Schools Open a Major Campaign
12 to Spur Integration". This was two years after the
13 Brown v. Board decision, which compelled city leaders
14 to form an integration commission out of a quote,
15 "moral obligation". In the spring of '57 the Board of
16 Education unanimously adopted this commission's
17 sweeping plan to integrate schools. It included deep
18 structural changes that would have transformed and
19 unequal school system. The plan was to be in quote,
20 "full force" within a year's time. But, white
21 segregationist's mothers and fathers made sure that
22 it never happened. These parents claimed they weren't
23 opposed to quote, "normal natural integration", just
24 give it more time they said. And it's funny because
25 also in 1957, a segregationist governor in Arkansas

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2 said the same thing, as justification for blocking
3 nine black teenagers from entering an all-white high
4 school. The hypocrisy there could not have been more
5 clear. So, as far as I can tell, the difference
6 whites in the South and whites in the North is that
7 is that the Northerners have been far more successful
8 at maintaining segregation. And I think the biggest
9 crime is that we teach students about what happened
10 in Little Rock, but we don't teach them about what
11 happened in New York City or Philadelphia or Chicago.
12 The schools here are still segregated and they aren't
13 segregated because of 400 years of American history,
14 they're segregated because segregationist policies
15 continue. Selective and specialized high school
16 admissions are segregationist policies. School
17 assignment zones have in many cases been drawn to
18 maximize segregation. So, we must teach students of
19 color that these policies are the reason they have
20 inferior resources in their schools and we must teach
21 white students that these policies are the reason
22 that they have outsized access to an elite education.
23 otherwise, students will continue to think that the
24 conditions in their schools are normal, that if they
25 get more they're worth more and if they get less it's

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2 because they're worth less. We must teach them that
3 this is not a meritocracy, it's a caste system. When
4 we teach students this truth, when our leaders aren't
5 afraid to use the term "segregation" and we stop
6 cowering to the pocketbooks of white power, we won't
7 need hearings like this because we will all
8 understand that integration is the same moral
9 obligation that your predecessors recognized 60 years
10 ago. And until we finally meet that obligation we'll
11 continue to deny hundreds of thousands of black and
12 Hispanic children the equitable education we keep
13 promising them but which they have never seen. Pilot
14 programs and incremental steps were not the answer in
15 1957, they're not the answer now. We don't need
16 another commission or task force to study this issue.
17 Adults have screwed this up for decades. It's time to
18 listen to the students and let them lead the way.
19 Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Very good. Okay,
21 let's go this way across, yeah.

22 NUSI OLUMEGBON: Good evening, my name is
23 Nusi... well my full name is Nusiab but I go by Nusi. I
24 am a senior at Academy for Young Writers, I represent
25 Black Lives Matter, G, GSA, Teens Take Charge and

1
2 also Sponsors for Educational Opportunities, also
3 SEO. I want to talk... I understand there's a lot of,
4 you know big numbers and like percentages about the
5 inequity and the issues, but I want to talk about
6 personally about how I feel. My school is a very
7 small school but we're in a large school where we
8 have multiple schools; Spring Creek, middle
9 schoolers, you know that fits in all special,
10 specialized... in the school and for a person like me
11 I'm very close minded like I like small classes, but
12 I noticed that since my school doesn't have enough
13 money or is like... is on, on a budget most of my
14 classes A... I have like AP literature where there's
15 like 30 to like almost 35 kids fit in and I, I mean I
16 understand other people likes... under... love the
17 classes but I'm a person who loves small like I want
18 teacher recognition and I want teachers to talk to me
19 personally and like help me guide it because without,
20 you know teachers looking at me instead of teachers
21 going at other students because you know they got
22 bigger voices, they got... you know more or less spirit
23 unlike me, I'm very introvert. It's not really
24 helping with my education and I want to like double
25 major in computer science and journalism because I am

1
2 a poet and I also am a programmer. I love computers,
3 I love technology and I also love writing and being...
4 be able to express myself. So, for the fact that I
5 realize that because my school is on a budget or is
6 like in a low area we won't be... we don't have like
7 enough spaces or ability to like be ourselves and be
8 able to like speak freely because we are forced under
9 the DOE's, you know... sorry, constraints, they have to
10 follow certain rules because, you know if they don't
11 they won't get enough money and I believe that's
12 unfair and really annoying, no... it's really
13 irritating to, to realize that I can be able to
14 like, you know do more because when I get... go off to
15 college I'm not... I'm going to be able to do more
16 because I'm in a bigger space, I am able to do things
17 where in high school where it's supposed to be like
18 already like a set... ready college, you're not going
19 to be able to go ahead because certain restraints
20 from the DOE and I believe that the DOE do not listen
21 to students, they say they do but I believe they
22 don't hear the voices that we are saying. If we talk
23 about the issues we... you... they come in our classes
24 and they see... oh we know... we learned this we learned
25 that but they don't really look into it, they don't

1
2 really talk to us because if you really sit down, if
3 you really talk with just one on one with us you
4 would realize that we're going through a lot of
5 issues, a lot of us got depression, a lot of us is
6 suffering from stuff at home because, you know
7 there's issues like parents are not talking and
8 parents are not... parents are working everyday so
9 there's a lot of issues going on with, with just the
10 students themselves because of certain DOE, DOE's
11 constraint and that's what... that bothers me today
12 because, you know they're not here to like really
13 understand where I'm coming from and where I'm going
14 with this. So, yeah...

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much,
16 got it, yes, very good.

17 NUSI OLUMEGBON: No problem.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah, next please.

19 DULCE MARQUEZ: Good afternoon. My name
20 is Dulce Marquez. I am a senior at New Heights
21 Academy Charter School and a member of Teens Take
22 Charge. This year I am taking calculus. In my high
23 school, calculus is the most challenging math class
24 available. Our class... our calculus teacher share with
25 us recently a statistic from The Atlantic from 2015;

1
2 "despite the fact that Latino kids make up a quarter
3 of all public-school students and black children
4 comprised more than 15 percent of students that year,
5 just a third of high schools where at least three
6 fourths of students were black, and Latino offered
7 calculus". As we allowed this to sink in, she
8 continued, "we don't have textbooks, the textbooks
9 from last year were too broken and in such ugly state
10 that they cannot, can, cannot longer be used, so
11 hopefully our school will soon order our new
12 textbooks". The majority of the students in my
13 calculus class are girls and all of those students in
14 the room are Latino and African American. So, why did
15 my teacher share this statistic with us? She also
16 showed us a picture of a calculus class at a more
17 successful and privileged, privileged school. The
18 students in the picture didn't look like us. In fact,
19 they were white. The majority of the students in the
20 class were, were boys and... holding calculators and
21 textbooks. In our class we often have a shortage of
22 calculators and some of them hardly even work. I am
23 here to talk about the shortage, shortage of supplies
24 and resources at my school. I am here to represent my
25 classmates, to represent my school and represent the

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group of people called the minority but who are actually the majority. My class is the epitome of the future environment, environment of classrooms. My question to you today is, why is it that if our classrooms of tomorrow will look like my calculus, calculus class of today, are we not fighting for these classes to have the best of resources?

According to this article by The Atlantic, the report found that high schools with high numbers of black and Latino students were less likely to offer physics, chemistry, and even algebra II. Why is it that we offer less opportunities to the minorities but then blame them for the detrimental effects of non-educated people in the American economy? I am here because I don't want just... I don't want to just ask these questions, I want to solve them.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much, next please.

MUHAMMAD DEEN: Good morning. My name is Muhammad Deen, I'm a senior at Victory Collegiate High School and I'm also from Teens Take Charge. A few things I really want to touch upon is as a senior right now going to a school that's a Title one school with mostly minorities one of the hardest things to

1
2 do is the college application process. Many things
3 such as a school profile which details the school's
4 SAT score and its financial status, my school didn't
5 have one and I actually had to approach my principal
6 over the, the last few months and had him construct
7 one that I could send to my common app. Doing early
8 decision wasn't even an option for most kids because
9 most of the requirements that the common app requires
10 from a guidance counselor was not available. Also
11 last year my school had an AP class and the AP
12 textbooks that did come, came a few weeks before the
13 test. So, especially as a high school senior who's
14 applying to colleges many colleges, many early
15 decision opportunities, early action are just seen as
16 off limits because of what the school does especially
17 for its senior support. So, you know going to these
18 schools, our school also weren't offering any extra
19 curriculums such as wood shop, music and arts, our
20 school would only have enough money for the
21 necessity. We also never for our grade had any
22 college trips outside of New York City and only went
23 to CUNY deprived schools. So, I'm just here to really
24 push the force and the implementation of more
25 programs and more extra curriculums outside of the

1
2 norm for schools in mostly minorities because arts
3 programs are the, the main one that take a hit and
4 also advanced classes, AP classes even though some
5 schools may have one they don't have the resources,
6 they don't have the teacher that's, that has the
7 credentials to teach that class, the class size is
8 too much so often times, you know when they say we'll
9 give this school an AP class they'll only push the
10 problem under the rug because they won't address it
11 in the full scope and to end my thing I have a short
12 poem I wrote about this. What makes school great is
13 an education, it's the interpersonal skills
14 developed, any kid can read a textbook and be
15 educated but the human connection is something that
16 can't be replicated, websites and online tutors can
17 have your child highly educated but social skills in
18 schools can't be emulated so when there's no
19 diversity and I'm surrounded by kids of the same
20 circumstances how come I think will be challenged,
21 I'm surrounded by an abundance of melanin, do I have
22 to go to college to see what it's like to interact
23 with a peer who has white skin, its like school has
24 given me a key but put a latch on the door, my school
25 wants me to, to, to dream to the moon but lack the

1
2 resources and has me latched to the floor, I'm used
3 to teachers leaving frequently, problems consistently
4 and they tell me it doesn't matter, your lack of
5 AP's, SAT prep, college readiness and school can't
6 all be made up if you have persistency, yeah right,
7 these positive resources lead my path to success
8 derailed, how many poor and black and brown students
9 is the system going to fail?

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Let, let me ask you a
11 question, would you know how many students are in
12 your school?

13 MUHAMMAD DEEN: My school has 336
14 children and my school is seven schools in one campus
15 building.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, how many guidance
17 counselors do you have?

18 MUHAMMAD DEEN: We have one.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: One and that guidance
20 counselor is responsible to help you with college
21 admission?

22 MUHAMMAD DEEN: He's, he's actually also
23 responsible for all interactions from 9th to 12th so,
24 social... so often times when I come for college
25 support there's been a fight between the freshman and

1
2 he's like I can't help you, these freshmen are having
3 an issue.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Uh-huh, okay. Thank
5 you, next please.

6 JEDERICK ESTRELLA: Good afternoon. My
7 name is Jederick Estrella and I'm a senior at Victory
8 Collegiate High School and a member of Teens Take
9 Charge. When it came to whether I would attend
10 college I always knew that it was something I was
11 fighting for. I didn't know at the time if was
12 fighting to go to college for myself or my immigrant
13 family from Dominican Republic. Coming here to this
14 country, I didn't expect it to be so split. Watching
15 shows on television one would think all high schools
16 across the country are full of this so-called
17 integration. I came to realize that it was quite the
18 opposite. It isn't daytime television, there aren't
19 any commercial breaks after this dramatic scene. I'm
20 a son of two modest, hardworking immigrants, but it's
21 apparent we're not lucky enough. I didn't get into
22 the pristine high school in Manhattan like my parents
23 wanted. Instead I got to a school in Canarsie. I
24 didn't get... I didn't get the school with kids of
25 different backgrounds, I got a school that is 88.6

1
2 percent black. Ironic that most of us aren't even
3 college ready. When it concerns safety, I don't even
4 get that sense of security at my school. It was
5 December 20th of 2016, this is third period and about
6 three... a few minutes from class coming to an end. All
7 I can hear are books being shuffled into bags and
8 overall chatter. Then all we hear is a sharp crack
9 and a slam. A bullet fires into the room and all of
10 us collectively huddle under desks. Glass landed on
11 the floor... on the floor. Some kids at this point are
12 commando crawling out of the room. I felt like I was
13 on battlefield, as if I had to prove to someone that
14 this education was worth receiving. Like I was at war
15 with something I couldn't see. That AP biology
16 teacher quit, and I wonder where she is today. I
17 wonder if she'll teach at a school like mine again. I
18 task you with spending a day in our shoes. Clear your
19 schedules, get testimony from students that go to
20 these bad schools especially the ones you oversee in
21 your district that fall behind because they need your
22 help. They're students just like me, going to schools
23 just like me, trying to make something out of
24 themselves just like me.

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Pretty incredible
3 story, thank you.

4 WHITNEY STEPHENSON: Hello everyone. My
5 name is Whitney Stephenson and I'm here to talk about
6 my personal story to when I realized that our
7 education system wasn't integrated. It was that vivid
8 segregation that I specifically seen at a young age.
9 So, I'm in a system that knows me for my numbers
10 rather than my individuality, an individuality that
11 was sparked by art and poetry, a path that seems non-
12 existent when in middle school art only appeared only
13 once in my three years and never seen or brought up
14 in any clubs. I had two math courses, global history,
15 US history and English courses all educational, yes
16 but ones that didn't allow me to access to further
17 build my imagination and creativity. I wanted to go
18 to an art school for high school and due to the lack
19 of access to art this was a challenge. I had to
20 create a portfolio with materials my school didn't
21 provide. I arrived at LaGuardia with a portfolio case
22 borrowed from my sister, art I created not fully
23 knowing the criteria, I entered, and I didn't see
24 much people who look like me, I looked at my
25 portfolio case in comparison to theirs and the type

1
2 was different in value and their artwork was clearly
3 seen to be used by utensils I didn't have. I became
4 immediately intimidated and saw the portfolio,
5 portfolio difference in quality of the work. That was
6 where within the art spectrum I saw the
7 disproportionality. Art was my first attempt to
8 follow my dream at age 12, even when I would see the
9 opposite responses of some saying when I say art
10 instead of lawyer to the question what do you want to
11 be when you grow up different responses. As access to
12 materials and opportunities weren't abundant to enter
13 high school for the arts this was a choice and
14 decision of me choosing my passion. As I went down
15 the path of the system's structure I took the
16 specialized high school test to get into the top
17 schools. Similar to the art school I saw people who
18 didn't look like me and if I did they were from my
19 school, I entered a testing area where I saw their
20 student body... student body to be predominately white
21 and Asian and a point where I'm getting to here is
22 that the difference in where we live and what schools
23 we go to is a difference that is rooted way deeper
24 than just the fact that it is demographically
25 different. We have access to different things and

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2 opportunities as a student in Stuyvesant and a
3 student who goes to public in Harlem won't have
4 access to the same opportunities available. As I
5 entered high school I have built the mentality and
6 one that my school tries to emit within our minds
7 that as a student of color we have to work 100 times
8 harder compared to white students who go to a school
9 in the Upper East Side because we're at a
10 disadvantage. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much,
12 next please.

13 NELSON LUNA: Hi, my name is Nelson Luna
14 and right now I'm going to speak about my earliest
15 memory of inequity and I think it's important because
16 while we're speaking about the school system you have
17 to understand the stance that these kids are starting
18 off with which is kids of color and kids of low
19 income backgrounds. So, my earliest memory of
20 inequity was in 6th grade and it was in my English
21 language class and my teacher was speaking about why
22 my charter school had a word count. So, we have a
23 one-million-word count where we had to read books and
24 then take online tests in order to earn the worlds
25 and she said the reason was because there was a 30-

1
2 million-word gap between students of low income
3 backgrounds and a fluent richer, whiter student. And
4 I remember the minute that she said that the class
5 like erupted in chaos, kids were like how is this
6 possible, you're lying like this is not true and it
7 was like the 6th grade classes went into like in
8 arguments with teacher and it wasn't until that she
9 pulled up the article by psychologists and after she,
10 she showed them, she's like look this is a real issue
11 the whole class stood silent and that's... before... that
12 was before I even knew what words like inequity,
13 inequality, injustice were but I understood that
14 there was a problem and I feel like that moment has
15 been reflected throughout my high school career
16 because even though the kids in my charter school
17 they're going to go to the same colleges as their
18 fluent white counterparts but our paths to these
19 colleges are not the same at all. The kids in my
20 charter school have to work way harder, we have to
21 read so much books in order to close this word gap,
22 we have to stay in school from 5:30... I mean from 7:30
23 to 5:30, we have to take more classes and we're
24 experiencing less... like less pathways to get to where
25 we want to be like what... when you were speaking

1
2 about, we don't have the opportunity to graduate and
3 have art classes or look at an art career because
4 what we're told is that no, like that's not the way
5 to go and that's not the opportunities that we're
6 given. And I think it's important because I didn't
7 realize this issue until really after that experience
8 and then when my best friend went to one of the top
9 private schools in the nation which is Spence and we
10 spoke about our experience and I was just like whoa
11 like this... it's crazy like it's a real... it's a real
12 crazy difference like she has a whole bunch of
13 different art classes and extra curriculums that she
14 can attend and participate in and she doesn't have to
15 go to, to school as long as us and it just really
16 shows that the students that we're working with are...
17 completely at a huge disadvantage than other students
18 and in order to really understand that we need equity
19 in our education system and we need a better
20 understanding that although these kids can make it
21 into the same colleges and the same careers and the
22 same success as other kids is going to be a lot
23 harder and... because they're at a, a bigger
24 disadvantage. So, thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. One of the things I'm a little bit surprised at with this panel is the number of students that go to the charter school, can you just show me who goes to charter schools here? And yet you're encountering some of the same issues that students in the district public schools, the district high schools or whatever, the, the city high schools are encountering as well. So, did you choose to go to the, the charter school?

DULCE MARQUEZ: I wasn't... I wasn't accepted to the... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Just need... just pull the mic a little closer and make sure it's on.

DULCE MARQUEZ: I wasn't accepted to the schools I applied to so I... it was my only choice, my... the charter school is a neighborhood school, so it was close by.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, that... the charter school was the second-choice kind of like, right...

[cross-talk]

DULCE MARQUEZ: Yes and my... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...to the... to the...

[cross-talk]

DULCE MARQUEZ: ...sister... [cross-talk]

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CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...specialized high school or whatever...

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5

DULCE MARQUEZ: And my older sister went there so... it's like... [cross-talk]

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CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And was that because your, your charter school was a... your better choice in your mind than the... than the, the district school that you would go to?

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11

12

DULCE MARQUEZ: No, like I said I wasn't accepted to the schools I did apply to so... it was part of... yeah, I was... [cross-talk]

13

14

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Part of those choices?

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DULCE MARQUEZ: Yeah.

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CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I see, okay, anybody else? No, okay. Just give... it's the first time I've actually heard this so I'm appreciative of you all coming in and, and sharing that information with us and maybe we'll have some other questions later on and I'll get back to you on it, okay?

22

DULCE MARQUEZ: Uh-huh.

23

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CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much for coming in, really... [cross-talk]

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DULCE MARQUEZ: Thank you... [cross-talk]

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CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...very moving
testimony. Council Member Lander?

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Yeah, well first
I want to thank you, all of you for your powerful
words and to Taylor and The Bell for bringing you
together and it was nice to spend some time with you
uptown at an event recently, you know obviously first
your stories are testament to, you know what you guys
are capable of and you know that, that's kind of in a
certain way all you need to know so I think your
words were very eloquent on that point and obviously
providing a segregated and unequal school system is,
you know an immoral discrimination against young
people of color but we also all suffer. There was an
amazing article that Vox had this week about what
we're losing in terms of innovation as a result of
not tapping into the innovation of young people, you
know and, and if, if what we believe is that we want
an inclusive multiracial democracy this is not what
we're producing and sure you can hoard privilege, but
you can't create an inclusive multiracial democracy
in the segregated school systems. So, I just want to
thank you for saying all of that. I unfortunately
have to, to go and I'm really sad about it seeing

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2 who's left in the list so I want to thank the Chair
3 for staying. I'm going to watch the live... the stream,
4 the whole thing is... you know is recorded and live up
5 online and anybody in the room who is here who I'm
6 not able to sit and stay for if you reach out to my
7 office we'll also sit down with you one on one or in
8 your small group. So, I apologize that I can't stick
9 around and I'm going to come back if Danny has to go
10 after my next meeting but thank you and thank you
11 guys again for this great panel.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much...
13 [cross-talk]

14 NUSI OLUMEGBON: Thank you... [cross-talk]

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...and we will get to
16 everyone so hang in there. Now we're going to call up
17 Randi Levine, Advocates for Children; Camillia Brown,
18 New York Civil Liberties Union; Melissa Iachan from
19 New York Lawyers for the Public Interest; Lori, I'm
20 going to mess it up again Podvesker from Include New
21 York City, NYC; and Maria Gil from Make the Road New
22 York. Okay and I just want to check to see if these
23 folks are still here. Is Ruth Melo here? Ruth?

24 RUTH MELO: Yes, right here...
25

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CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Oh okay, very good.

3

Kristen Berger is she here? Yeah, okay, not for now

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we're just seeing if you're here. David Goldsmith?

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Yeah, okay. Naomi Pena? Okay, Lucas Liu? Yeah, okay

6

there you are, I see you in the back and Ayanna

7

Behin?

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AYANNA BEHIN: Yes.

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CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, so hang in

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there. That'll be the next panel so hang in there.

11

Alright, now this panel can I ask you to raise your

12

right hand please? Do you solemnly swear or affirm to

13

tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the

14

truth and to answer Council Member questions

15

honestly? Okay, would you like to start over here?

16

RANDI LEVINE: Thank you for the

17

opportunity to speak with you. my name is Randi

18

Levine and I'm Policy Director for Advocates for

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Children of New York. For more than 45 years,

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Advocates for Children has worked to ensure a high-

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quality education for New York students who face

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barriers to academic success, focusing on students

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from low income backgrounds. We work on behalf of

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children who are at greatest risk for school based

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discrimination or academic failure due to poverty,

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2 disability, race, ethnicity, immigrant or English
3 Language Learner status, sexual orientation, gender
4 identity, homelessness, or involvement in the foster
5 care or juvenile or criminal systems. Public
6 education has the potential to bring together
7 different groups of children and promote the values
8 of diversity, inclusion and opportunity that are so
9 important to our city. New York City's children have
10 a vast range of abilities and disabilities. They come
11 from homes that speak more than 100 different
12 languages, practice a wide variety of religions, and
13 span the entire economic spectrum from extreme
14 poverty to enormous wealth. Currently, enrollment
15 across the school system perpetuates divisions by
16 race and other attributes as well. The UCLA Civil
17 Rights Project found that our city has one of the
18 most racially segregated public-school systems in the
19 nation. School assignment systems that create and
20 further this segregation need urgent attention.
21 Beyond school assignment however, we are alarmed by
22 disparities in educational outcomes. For example, on
23 the English Language Arts exam, while 61 percent of
24 New York City's white and Asian students performed
25 proficiently, only 29 percent of black and Hispanic

1
2 students performed proficiently, only 10.7 percent of
3 students with disabilities, 78 percent of whom are
4 black or Hispanic performed proficiently, and only
5 5.6 percent of English Language Learners performed
6 proficiently. The city should ensure that students
7 from diverse backgrounds have access to high
8 achieving schools and programs and should also ensure
9 that schools are prepared to provide an excellent
10 education to all students who enroll. Schools need
11 resources, training, and the development of
12 specialized programs and supports. For example, to
13 serve students and families from a variety of
14 backgrounds, the city must ensure that school staff
15 receive training in cultural competency and implicit
16 bias. To ensure that students with physical
17 disabilities have the same school options as their
18 peers, the city must increase the number of schools
19 that are fully accessible. To serve students living
20 in shelters, the city must increase the number of DOE
21 social workers focused on providing advocacy and
22 counseling that many of these students need. To serve
23 students with disabilities and English Language
24 Learners, the city must ensure that schools have
25 specialized programs that meet their needs. To

1
2 improve school outcomes for students, it is important
3 that the city examine school admissions policies and
4 at the same time change what is happening inside
5 those schools to ensure they are prepared to foster
6 inclusion and serve diverse groups of students. We
7 appreciate the work of the City Council, thank you
8 for the opportunity to testify and I'm happy to
9 answer any questions.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you Randi, next
11 please.

12 CAMILLIA BROWN: My name is Camillia
13 Brown... [cross-talk]

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Can you put the mic
15 on.

16 CAMILLIA BROWN: Sorry. My name is
17 Camillia Brown and I'm a Legislative Fellow at the
18 New York Civil Liberties Union and I'm here
19 testifying on the organization's behalf. Schools in
20 New York City among... are amongst the most segregated
21 in the entire country, a pressing civil rights issues
22 that needs to be addressed. The New York City
23 Department of Education, DOE has an obligation to
24 remedy the segregation in its school system that was
25 created by discriminatory housing and economic

1
2 practices and perpetuated by the failure to implement
3 and maintain systemwide policies to integrate the
4 schools. The NYCLU is disappointed the DOE has not
5 sat more ambitious goals in the areas of school
6 desegregation and integration. A study by the Center
7 of the New York City New York City Affairs found that
8 the DOE could reach its stated goals without
9 implementing any of its proposals due simply to
10 shifting demographic patterns. This clearly shows the
11 DOE is not taking adequate responsibility to meet the
12 challenge of desegregation. Even within its very
13 modest goals, we recommend that the DOE make two
14 changes to ensure the best possible outcome. First,
15 the DOE should track its progress towards these goals
16 and should publish data by district in an easily
17 digestible format. Second, the DOE must tailor its
18 policies to the needs of existing schools
19 particularly those schools that are achieving
20 integration already. The DOE's Diversity Plan makes
21 the mistake of treating every single school across
22 the nation's largest district exactly the same and
23 requiring them to adopt the exact same policies
24 abolishing both limited unscreened admissions models
25 and middle school revealed rankings. However, some

1
2 schools have been successfully utilizing these... those
3 strategies as a tool for integration and have the
4 enrollment data to show for it. For those schools the
5 DOE's approach threatens to take away a key tool, the
6 DOE's one size fits all approach to a district of
7 this size and complexity is oversimplified and under
8 considered. We recommend the DOE study existing
9 school models that have achieved greater than average
10 integration and work on scaling those models or at
11 least find ways to preserve them rather than paint
12 every school with the same policy brush. The city
13 council can also convene necessary stakeholders from
14 multiple disciplines to discuss issues of school
15 segregation in the city. Most experts agree that
16 housing and educational segregation are inextricably
17 linked yet most policies to address one of these
18 problems are exclusive to the other. Although each
19 community has different needs relating to education
20 and housing, we cannot achieve inclusive sustainable
21 communities if reform is pursued in isolation.
22 Therefore, we recommend that the City Council's
23 Committees on Education, Housing and Buildings,
24 Public Policy, and Land Use or other relevant
25 committees share information and collaborate

1
2 including holding joint hearings to ensure the house..
3 that housing, zoning, economic, and education
4 policies collectively support the integration of New
5 York City schools. This cross-committee work should
6 ensure that the DOE's enrollment projections include
7 information on proposed and actual construction in
8 districts. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much,
10 next please.

11 MELISSA IACHAN: Good afternoon. My name
12 is Melissa Iachan and I'm a Senior Staff Attorney at
13 New York Lawyers for the Public Interest. Thank you
14 to Chair Dromm and the Education Committee for
15 holding this oversight hearing on the critical issue
16 of school diversity and the need for meaningful
17 school integration in our city. NYLPI has been
18 involved in the fight for equity in public education
19 in our city for many years. Most recently, we have
20 advocated on behalf of students to ensure that their
21 access to physical education and after school sports
22 is not determined by their race, ethnicity,
23 geographic area, or school size. The issue of school
24 diversity and the serious lack of school integration
25 in today's public high schools in New York City is

1
2 directly related to the starkly unequal access to
3 after school sports that public high school students
4 are faced with. NYLPI has been working with students,
5 organizers, teachers, and coaches in our public high
6 schools for a few years on efforts to raise awareness
7 of the severe inequity in access to Public School
8 Athletic League or PSAL sports teams and to enact
9 changes to our city's policies in order to ensure
10 more equal distribution of resources tied to after
11 school sports teams. The problems with the current
12 system of allocating DOE funded sports teams to
13 schools is multi-layered and results in an incredibly
14 disproportionate result of large, more integrated
15 schools having access to many more sports teams than
16 many small, segregated schools. Preliminarily, the
17 system must be reformed to be more transparent.
18 Currently, the PSAL has sole authority to determine
19 which schools are granted the sports teams that they
20 request and which team's requests to deny without
21 making any sort of standard decision-making criteria
22 or scoring system publicly available. NYLPI has
23 submitted at least two Freedom of Information Law
24 requests asking for specific analyses detailing the
25 criteria utilized in particular decisions the PSAL

1
2 made over the past two years and the DOE continues to
3 refuse to provide or produce any such documentation.
4 This lack of transparency and the lack of any
5 publicly available standard policy by which the PSAL
6 makes its team granting decision, on their own would
7 be troubling. But this is even more concerning when
8 you look at the results of the shrouded decision
9 making; based on 2015 data, the 50 high schools with
10 the most white and Asian students averaged twice as
11 many sports teams as the 50 high schools with the
12 highest percentage of black and Latino schools. Based
13 on the same data, the 50 schools with more white
14 students averaged 19 PSAL sport team options per high
15 school, while the 50 schools with the highest black
16 and Latino enrollment averaged about eight PSAL sport
17 team options per high school. Currently, there are at
18 least 111 schools with zero PSAL sports team options.
19 All of these schools are at least 97 percent black
20 and Latino. I know some members of the City Council
21 are just as outraged by these statistics as NYLPI and
22 our partners in the Fair Play coalition are,
23 including the co-sponsors of Intro 1010-A, which was
24 drafted to bring more accountability and transparency
25 to the PSAL team granting process. However, that bill

1
2 and all of its ambitions simply faded away in this
3 council, as it was not given a hearing with this
4 committee. It is our hope that today's important
5 discussion on integration is an opportunity to shed
6 light on this specific impact of how current school
7 segregation and the current PSAL systems perpetuate
8 discrimination and disproportionate allocation of DOE
9 resources to the detriment of black and Latino
10 students in our city's public high schools. We hope
11 this conversation continues into the next council and
12 that Intro 1010-A will be reintroduced and will have
13 a chance to be heard in its own right so that this
14 body can help bring more accountability, justice,
15 fairness and equity into the Public School Athletic
16 League. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Who was the sponsor
18 on that?

19 MELISSA IACHAN: That is Antonio Reynoso.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Sorry?

21 MELISSA IACHAN: Antonio Reynoso.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Reynoso and would you
23 know the breakdown of the small schools versus the
24 large schools because that was an issue in the past
25

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2 and what the council did was to provide additional
3 funding to... [cross-talk]

4 MELISSA IACHAN: Right, that funding..
5 [cross-talk]

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...keep the number of..
7 [cross-talk]

8 MELISSA IACHAN: ...went right to the..
9 [cross-talk]

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...small schools..
11 [cross-talk]

12 MELISSA IACHAN: ...PSAL though so the PSAL
13 actually... [cross-talk]

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Sorry?

15 MELISSA IACHAN: The Public School
16 Athletic League controls that funding too and so it's
17 the same body that's making those decisions.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: But I'm just... I'm
19 wondering if you know the breakdown in terms of the
20 racial disparities that you spoke about... [cross-talk]

21 MELISSA IACHAN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...if they are in the
23 smaller schools or in the larger schools... [cross-
24 talk]

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MELISSA IACHAN: It's the smaller...

[cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...because usually...

[cross-talk]

MELISSA IACHAN: ...schools that... [cross-

talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...the PSAL... [cross-

talk]

MELISSA IACHAN: ...tend to be more

segregated...

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Hold up, hold up,

usually the PSAL... the, the public... the Public School

Athletic League schools are the larger ones that's

why I was asking that question.

MELISSA IACHAN: The statistics that I

gave you are just of PSAL schools, they don't...

[cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Just the PSAL...

[cross-talk]

MELISSA IACHAN: ...include... yes... [cross-

talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...okay. Alright, thank

you very much... [cross-talk]

MELISSA IACHAN: No problem... [cross-talk]

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CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

LORI PODVESKER: Thank you. Hi, my name is Lori Podvesker, first and foremost I'm the parent of a loving and colorful 15-year-old boy with cerebral palsy who attends a district 75 high school program on the Lower East Side. I also work at Include NYC where I lead the agency's policy work on disability and education. We would like to thank the New York City Council's Committee on Education for holding this important hearing on the oversight of diversity in New York City schools. We testify today to highlight the need for the New York City Department of Education officials to focus on the inclusion of students with disabilities in all schools while they implement new admissions initiatives to increase the number of middle and high schools serving English Language Learners and students with disabilities. Include NYC formerly resources for children with special needs has worked with hundreds of thousands of individuals since our founding 35 years ago helping them navigate the complex special education service and support systems so that young people with disabilities can be included in all aspects in New York City. We commend

1
2 the Department of Education on their efforts to
3 better integrate students with disabilities through
4 their Diversity in Admission Plan. In our work we see
5 firsthand the need for diverse New York City schools
6 and how greater diversity helps close the academic
7 achievement gap between non-disabled students and
8 students with disabilities. However, we believe that
9 all schools must be held accountable for
10 programmatically, socially and culturally supporting
11 students with disabilities to achieve diversity and
12 meaningful inclusion. The Department of Education
13 must raise the proficiency in graduation rates for
14 the 193,000 school aged students with disabilities in
15 New York City, that's Yankee Stadium filled three
16 times. We need... they need to foster better social and
17 emotional skills among students and increase the
18 independent skills of students with more involved
19 needs. The future of all of our students depends on
20 us doing this and doing it well. As a result, we
21 recommend that the Department of Education does the
22 following; increase the number of members on the
23 School Diversity Advisory Group whose primary
24 responsibility is to represent the interest of
25 students with disabilities. At quantitative and

1
2 qualitative measurements to the existing
3 accountability structures which include learning
4 surveys, quality reviews, in school quality reports
5 that access the extent in which a school meaningfully
6 integrates students with disabilities with non-
7 disabled students and requires schools to retract... to
8 track and report on inclusive activities that occur
9 between co-located schools and buildings and their
10 students. This would not cost the Department of
11 Education any money. Thank you for taking the time
12 today to consider this important matter. We look
13 forward to partnering with you to improve equity and
14 access for all young people with disabilities in New
15 York City.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much,
17 I appreciate it, thank you. Maria.

18 MARIA GIL: Good afternoon. My name is
19 Maria Gil and I am a parent of six years. For about
20 18 years I have been volunteering in my daughter's
21 schools and I understand the need, that having a
22 curriculum that goes along with the diversity of
23 students in their schools so that they are not
24 limited by their ethnicity. We need books, we need
25 materials, we need libraries that reflect the culture

1
2 of our children. We also need to implement a diverse
3 curriculum and teachers that know how to teach our
4 children no matter where they live, no matter if
5 they're poor or they're rich. Two of my daughters are
6 already in college and when I was writing this... my
7 speech I asked again because before I asked the same
8 question... culture onto class... all your classmates
9 cultures they responded in saying, we didn't learn
10 anything in my school. What we learn, we learn from
11 home TV or our own research, this means the students
12 can graduate from college without knowing anything
13 about their culture. We can take the examples from
14 other cities and states that already have these
15 courses that students can see themselves reflect on
16 their own culture, how we can trust the
17 administration with diversity if they haven't even
18 trained one teacher with a new initiative. If this
19 administration truly believes in culture and
20 diversity in the New York City start now training
21 teachers in the school administration and by
22 listening to all of these students today I feel proud
23 of myself because I have never, never give up by
24 standing and telling my girls at home, yes you can
25 even that nobody sees your potential at your school,

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2 I can see that you are going to college and I feel
3 proud because two of my daughters are in college
4 right now. Thank you very much.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And Maria you have
6 much to be proud of and your story I know and I'm
7 familiar with it and I... you've been here before and
8 you've testified in front of this council and it's
9 because you continue to fight for your children that
10 that's why your children are in college. Parents
11 shouldn't have to do that, the, the schools should
12 work with the parents to make sure that these stories
13 happen more often, that everybody has a chance to get
14 into college but deeply appreciate you being here and
15 sharing that story with us because that is what's
16 going to create change ultimately so I'm very grate...
17 very grateful [Spanish dialogue]

18 MARIA GIL: Thank you...

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [Spanish dialogue]...

20 MARIA GIL: Gracias.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, gracias. Thank
22 you to the panel. Okay. Ayanna Behin, President CEC
23 13; Lucas Liu, CEC 3; Naomi Pena, CEC 1; David
24 Goldsmith, ECC; Kristen Berger, Community Education
25

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2 Council 3 and Ruth Melo, CEC 5. And we're checking
3 now to see is Grant Cowles here?

4 GRANT COWLES: Yeah, yeah...

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, you'll be next.
6 Chanera Pierce, okay, next, Jose Miranda, is Jose
7 here, okay, Sonia Park, okay good Erin Carstensen,
8 Erin, is Erin here? Alright, well hold on there and
9 Allison Keil, Community Roots?

10 ALLISON KEIL: Here.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, good. Alright,
12 you'll be in the next panel, okay? Alright, let me
13 ask this panel to raise your right hand please. Do
14 you solemnly swear or affirm to tell the truth, the
15 whole truth and nothing but the truth and to answer
16 Council Member questions honestly?

17 [panel affirms]

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, should we start
19 over here?

20 NAOMI PENA: Hi, is it on? Hi, my name is
21 Naomi Pena...

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: It's not on you just
23 need to... make sure that red light is on.

24 DAVID GOLDSMITH: There it is.
25

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2 NAOMI PENA: Okay, got it. Hi, my name is
3 Naomi Pena, I'm the CEC President of district... school
4 district one. Before I proceed to give you my, my
5 testimony, I first want to say that I'm a life...
6 privileged to be a life long resident of the Lower
7 East Side and I am very fortunate to be able to raise
8 my four children in community school district one and
9 they have gone through the system in school district
10 one. I'm here because I, I really want to communicate
11 the amount of work that has gone... that has gone
12 behind our initiatives. I know as of now school
13 district one is among other districts, part of the
14 apple of DOE's eye but make no mistake of it, the
15 years leading up to this announcement were not as
16 pleasant, they were very tested, and it was to the
17 point where you could cut the tension with a knife.
18 Often times parents like myself are looked at from
19 the DOE perspective as troublemakers and nonsensible
20 and people who cannot be rationed with and one of the
21 frustrating issues I've had during this whole process
22 is A, the noninvolvement of DOE leading up to this
23 point and when DOE finally did decide to show up,
24 they just announced their version of our plan without
25 really discussing the plan with us. So, since then I

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2 have had several conversations with Josh Wallack and
3 we have come... we have come to a meeting of the minds
4 but I, I want to make understand the council that
5 although it is cool the fact that we are now even
6 after the 1964 boycott in New York City, the fact
7 that we are 50 years plus still talking about this
8 process is really embarrassing and the fact that we
9 are still having to have these city council hearings,
10 the fact that this is still an issue really should be
11 a testament to the fact that we need to get our, our,
12 our... we need to do this right and we need to do it
13 and, and stop dragging our feet. One of my main
14 concerns with this council, this new initiative that
15 DOE has proposed is implementing an Advisory Board,
16 part of their initial plan in quotations of last year
17 was a plan to bring together folks to advise the
18 Mayor. I'm concerned because I don't really
19 necessarily see that there are inputs from people
20 like myself like other community leaders who know on
21 the ground what matters. I know housing is one of
22 those topics but in school district one where we're
23 100 percent choice, the truth is we have an over 50
24 percent white school across the street from public
25 housing. So, we can argue that that's not necessarily

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2 true but what I really want to implore is that
3 district one has been doing this work for over five
4 years and we deliberately did not partner up with any
5 organization because we knew what we needed to do and
6 we want to... and I'm here because I want to make sure
7 that this council understands that although there may
8 be other folks that claim that they were helping they
9 came in the fourth quarter of the last ten minutes of
10 the game. I was in the game the whole entire time and
11 I think we need to understand that this was a lot of
12 work and DOE was really resistant. So, if they're
13 really going to do this they need to be honest about
14 it and really show support where its needed. Thank
15 you.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I hear what you're
17 saying and look we, we had to push to even pass the
18 legislation here in the council and we've been part
19 of these discussions I think since five or six years
20 ago as well... [cross-talk]

21 NAOMI PENA: Right... [cross-talk]

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...if I'm not mistaken.
23 So, we applaud you and we, we applaud the progress
24 that you've made, and we know that there's still a
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2 lot more room for progress to, to, to be made so...
3 thank you. Would you like to go next...

4 DAVID GOLDSMITH: Hi, thank you Chair
5 Dromm for sticking it out and... [cross-talk]

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: If you could hold
7 just one minute because there's... [cross-talk]

8 DAVID GOLDSMITH: Sure... [cross-talk]

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...another student here
10 who I didn't call who wants to give testimony and
11 would you come up, yes, is that Kaira and we can get
12 you on this panel as well. Okay, so why don't you go
13 ahead and then we'll get to Kaira swearing her in, in
14 a moment. Okay, go ahead... [cross-talk]

15 DAVID GOLDSMITH: Oh I go ahead, okay.
16 So, I... yeah, my name is David Goldsmith, I'm a member
17 and past Co-chair of the Education Counsel
18 Consortium, the ECC, a citywide organization of
19 elected parent leaders that includes members of every
20 community education counsel and citywide council in
21 our very diverse city of New York. the ECC Committee
22 on Equity and Diversity believes that the Mayor and
23 the DOE have done little of significance to confront
24 the separate and not equal delivery of public
25 education to the children of our city. It's been over

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2 four years since the Mayor was elected the first time
3 and yet it's newly formed advisory committee on
4 equity and diversity will be meeting just for the
5 very first time I think next week. The New York State
6 SIPP Grants to utilize socioeconomic integration as a
7 pathway to school improvement given to eight
8 districts including district one and my district, 13
9 have been egregiously mismanaged and rendered
10 essentially ineffectual for their original purpose. I
11 would invite the City Council to confer with the
12 state authorizers and see what the... what they think
13 of how well the, the Department of Education has...
14 have been stewards of these very important efforts,
15 state efforts towards school desegregation, I think
16 you'll find it quite alarming. To affirm Council
17 Member Torres's comments about and perhaps in a
18 different way, in Acoholic Anonymous they say no one
19 can recover from the illness of alcoholism if they
20 can't publicly acknowledge they have the disease,
21 does this not apply to us in New York City in the
22 disease called segregation and how can we have a plan
23 for equity and diversity if we don't even mention the
24 word. The collective first step to recovery we can
25 all stand up and say yes, we are a, a segregated

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2 school system base... rooted in, in racism and we've
3 got a lot of work to do on this and if we're going
4 to... and it's time for the Mayor and the Department of
5 Education to acknowledge that race and class define,
6 have always defined how well we deliver public
7 education to the majority of the students... the
8 children in our city. So, any plans to promote equity
9 and diversity and we hear this all the time, equity
10 and diversity but you can't bypass... you can't get to
11 equity and diversity if you don't break segregation
12 separate, it is not equal, it's just been
13 historically proven, and it never will be. I'd just
14 like to, you know go off the cuff a little bit here
15 and to let you know that the... education council
16 consortium does not understand... believes that the DOE
17 really doesn't understand the centrality of the
18 segregation in the race and class issue and from our
19 experience we find that there's a lot of talk about
20 equity and diversity but there's really a lack of
21 focus and no clear mandate, all of our experience...
22 like poor Josh Wallack that poor man has to do Pre-K,
23 he's got to do 3PKA... 3P... whatever they call it, he's
24 got all these initiatives and he has to desegregate
25 the largest public school system in the United States

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2 in his spare time and unfortunately that's our... been
3 our experience in district 13 where the
4 superintendent, the school leadership... the district
5 leadership team, the CEC, the President's Council,
6 the... all the elected including our Council Members
7 that were here today are, are all in favor working
8 with... and the, the DOE doesn't have the resources nor
9 the personnel, nor the expertise to help us do the
10 work we want to do. The ECC, we, we sent a very
11 simple and I've submitted it for... in, in the
12 testimony there, some policy recommendations and one
13 of them is that clearly the department has to and
14 must assign a deputy level... a deputy chancellor level
15 person in charge of staff with resources, budget and
16 expertise to, to, to actually do this work, they're
17 not prepared to do it, they're prepared to talk about
18 it but they have no preparation in terms of resources
19 to get the job done.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you and I think
21 the AA analogy is a good... an appropriate one and the
22 first step to get beyond denial is also acceptance of
23 what the issue is so... [cross-talk]

24 DAVID GOLDSMITH: Yes... [cross-talk]

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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...if you can't say the
3 word it's a problem.

4 DAVID GOLDSMITH: Yes... [cross-talk]

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...thank you, next
6 please.

7 LUCAS LIU: Hi, thank you for allowing me
8 this opportunity to speak. My name is Lucas Liu, I'm
9 from CEC three. As part of my role on the CEC I am
10 responsible for working with the schools in our
11 district that have dual language programs. One thing
12 I'm going to add at... before I start on what I had
13 prepared just based on things I've heard earlier, you
14 know everyone seems to forget that Asians are
15 minorities too and seem to be left out of that
16 discussion. To talk about... you know if you talk to
17 Council Member Chin you'll get schools in her, her
18 district in Chinatown Lower East Side or if you go
19 out to Elmhurst, Flushing you find schools with high
20 Asian populations that also have students that are
21 struggling. Not everyone... not all Asian students go
22 to Stuyvesant, Bronx Science and Brooklyn Tech, they
23 have the same issues that other minorities have, and
24 I think people seem to forget that quite often. So,
25 maybe that's something that, you know should make it

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2 onto the agenda a little more often. But to continue
3 with my... what I had prepared, you know I, I don't
4 need any more reports to tell me about how, you know
5 segregated and lack of diversity exists in our
6 school, I don't think any of us do at this point and
7 what we really need to do now is start talking about
8 what are we going to do about it, not even talk about
9 it, you know we need to start doing something and no
10 more reports, no more meetings, you know unless it's
11 to talk about what are the actual things we're going
12 to start doing. It's all our responsibilities, it
13 can't just be on the DOE, if we just waited for the
14 DOE it would never happen and... not to blame them, I
15 mean they've got 10,000 things on, on their plate
16 just like as was mentioned, you know Josh Wallack the
17 poor guy, right, you know one man, you know good luck
18 to him, right. But the other part is, you know we
19 just talk about our public schools and the, the, the
20 lack of diversity and, and the segregation in our
21 public schools, you know let's not forget that that
22 exists in our charter schools too and there is... you
23 know our... there are... there is research and articles
24 out there about how, how there's lack of diversity in
25 our charter schools. So, if you don't include those

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2 in our conversations then, you know we're not, not
3 really addressing the whole problem, you know the
4 other thing about the solution is you're going to
5 have to have parent buy in otherwise you're, you're
6 doomed to failure or you're doomed to dragging this
7 out for many, many, many years and the solutions need
8 to be at a district level, it can't be a one size
9 fits all, every district is different, what works in
10 one district doesn't work in another, you know just
11 like we all know what works at one school does not
12 work in another school in the same district. You know
13 the other thing we have to do is... that will make this
14 work is, you know you need to look at what makes a
15 school attractive to parents and what makes it not
16 attractive and start addressing those issues head on,
17 you know it, it, it's not just adding a G and T
18 program, you know it's just making it a good quality
19 school and that in and of itself will give parents
20 reason to attend. At our district three elementary
21 school enrollment event, we had a table for dual
22 language programs and the number of parents that came
23 up interested in dual language programs was
24 tremendous and then they find out that their school
25 that they're zoned for doesn't have a dual language

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2 program. So, those are programs that if you put in
3 schools and you properly support them and fund them
4 will draw the parents, will draw that diversity that
5 people are looking for. To try to force solutions on
6 that aren't things that parents in the district want...
7 you know everyone refers to that UCLA report, you
8 know it refers to school choice or controlled choice
9 20 times so clearly that's, that's a bias report. I,
10 I don't disagree with, with what's in it but I...
11 obviously the solution they're proposing has.. was
12 already predetermined. So, I think you have to look
13 at what works in each district and what doesn't. If
14 you want to look at a perfect example, right now we
15 have PS145, we just started a Russian dual language
16 program, it's a high black and Hispanic minority
17 school, watch what a dual language program does to
18 the composition of that school, that's something
19 that's happening right now, it's something we could
20 all study as a case example and I'm happy to help
21 explore that. We also have another school, PS84 had a
22 small, we'll call it white because that's how the DOE
23 classifies it, small white population, they put in a,
24 a French dual language program and now it's 40
25 percent white. I'm not saying that that is the only

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2 reason why because its standards and it's, it's
3 performance has also increased because of the
4 principal and the teachers but I think that's
5 something we need to look at. So, I, I believe as a
6 solution we should be looking at what parents what
7 and including things like dual language programs and
8 STEM programs and things of that nature that will by
9 itself attract the parents that we want to bring in
10 and the diversity that we want to bring in. Thank
11 you.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And I think
13 progressive education is something that would be
14 attractive to folks as well because what a lot of
15 people are paying for like in Dalton and those places
16 is a progressive education and if we were to have
17 that in our school system as well I think that would
18 be an attraction for folks as, as well. So, we'll...
19 [cross-talk]

20 LUCAS LIU: And so I think we need...
21 [cross-talk]

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...take in suggestions...
23 [cross-talk]

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LUCAS LIU: ...to start talking about the solutions and no more about the history of how we got here.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes...

LUCAS LIU: You know it's just let's look forward and start addressing it.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: But I think the program piece attracts folks, yep, next please.

KRISTEN BERGER: Hi, I'm Kristen Berger, I'm also from CEC three but I'm speaking from a prepared statement from... on behalf of the entire council. So, to achieve integration CEC three believes our schools need high level leadership and integration, a commitment of resources, authentic community engagement and greater transparency. The current DOE policy is inadequate in meeting these needs. CEC three finds four specific areas where the diversity policy falls short. One, is an authentic community engagement. The community must have a leadership role in the discussion and decision making from the earliest stages. Community driven got... ground level discourse often starts more than a year ahead of a vote. The Chancellor's Reg A-190 however is driven by the DOE bureaucracy and lacks the

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2 respectful and thorough engagement of the community.
3 Specifically, CEC three believes that A-190 must
4 closer align... must closely align with A-185 in order
5 to implement our citywide efforts in diversity. Two,
6 the DOE needs to make a serious commitment to
7 leveling the playing field between district and
8 charter schools. My colleague alluded to that. Part
9 of our concern is that this would also address access
10 to marketing lists and resource allocation. Three,
11 equitable resource allocation. We see this policy as
12 tinkering with specific policies to try to fill gaps
13 but that remains insufficient. We are alarmed by the
14 tactic acceptance by the city that the PTA's will
15 provide sustained supplementary budgets in order to
16 help schools, this breeds inequality. Four, to the
17 city council we echo what others have mentioned
18 today, that the Schools Diversity Accountability
19 Report lacks robustness, it needs to become more user
20 friendly, it needs to include data on students
21 applying to screened programs not just the ones who
22 are in, a better measure rather than free and reduced
23 priced lunch and include data on charter schools. We
24 have expanded on these issues in our written
25 testimony and discussed the school environment

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2 further. The one thing I wanted to add is we echo
3 what our colleague in District one said about being
4 wary of the idea of an Advisory Council because in
5 our experience that Advisory Council is likely to be
6 top down rather than bottom up and we would certainly
7 be disappointed to see it pan out that way. Thank
8 you.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, getting
10 information from state authorized charter schools is
11 difficult for this committee since we don't have
12 oversight over them and... [cross-talk]

13 KRISTEN BERGER: We know...

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah, I mean I
15 brought it up in the... in my opening as well and I, I
16 questioned the DOE on it... on some of this also so...
17 [cross-talk]

18 DAVID GOLDSMITH: We, we recently had...
19 the ECC had a meeting with the Chancellor and the
20 state authorizers from CUNY and from the Board of
21 Regions. It was a very interesting meeting, kind of a
22 first... it was kind of like a summit and Melissa
23 Harris who is in charge of the charter schools and,
24 and new school's division in the DOE, is kind of... is
25 committed now with the state authorizers that came to

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that meeting; David Franks and Susan Miller Carello to begin to resolve some of these issues of information, lack of information, lack of communication and also accountability of charters. I'd invite you to give Melissa Harris a call and if you have any questions of the state authorizers she will... she has promised to facilitate communication and maybe... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Good, I hope they're changing... [cross-talk]

DAVID GOLDSMITH: ...you could get some answers... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...because every time I visited the state authorizers they... [cross-talk]

DAVID GOLDSMITH: Yeah... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...they just shut... [cross-talk]

DAVID GOLDSMITH: Yep... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...me down...

DAVID GOLDSMITH: Absolutely, well... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah... [cross-talk]

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2 DAVID GOLDSMITH: ...let... we're going to
3 take them at their word, they spoke in public and
4 committed to that so..

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, good news.

6 DAVID GOLDSMITH: Good luck.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, next
8 please.

9 AYANNA BEHIN: Hi. I just want to echo
10 what my colleagues on other CEC's have said today
11 about concrete steps for change. I think they've all
12 been great ideas and I hope that we move forward with
13 them. my name is Ayanna Behin, three years ago I
14 testified before this body as a PTA president and
15 attached a report from the Century Foundation for you
16 to read. In it Halley Potter wrote, "most K to 12
17 education reforms are about trying to make separate
18 but equal schools for rich and poor work well. The
19 results of these efforts have been discouraging." At
20 the time we were advocating for controlled choice for
21 principals to use as a tool to unpack the race,
22 economic and ability segregation in the schools.
23 Today I'm President of the CEC for District 13 in
24 Brooklyn and our district is large and very diverse
25 racially, economically, and socially. Our schools

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2 include children from Bed Stuy, Park Slope, Fort
3 Greene, Clinton Hill, Brooklyn Heights, and DUMBO.
4 And like many other school districts in New York
5 City, this puts us in the forefront of the mission to
6 consciously desegregate our schools by every metric.
7 For us, it's not just a conversation, it's about the
8 daily reality for students and families and for a
9 community that's striving to overcome the mistakes of
10 our past and chart a better course for our future. As
11 the home of two controlled choice schools we've seen
12 how it works and we encourage you to continue to add
13 it... keep it in your toolbox. As you... we, excuse me,
14 try to unravel the deliberate institutionalization of
15 racism, classism and sorting of students into winners
16 and losers. In the three years since your last
17 hearing on diversity, we've learned a lot about how
18 deeply entrenched segregation is and how a parent's
19 fears keep it entrenched are used as an excuse for
20 that, but our schools are filled with dedicated and
21 talented teachers and administrators, caring and
22 committed families and most importantly children that
23 are eager to learn. We can desegregate our schools.
24 By continuing to shine a light on the fact that our
25 schools were segregated on purpose and can only

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2 become desegregated on purpose. We need to make sure
3 our definition of diversity remains broad but make it
4 clear that our intention to integrate our schools is
5 just that, integration and it shouldn't be diluted by
6 other goals. Diversity is not enough, we also need
7 antiracist pedagogy in classrooms which starts with
8 teacher training and classroom observation and
9 providing teachers with tools they need to teach
10 including books that reflect the community and the
11 diversity in the city. We need to rethink the way
12 that our schools are financed so that they're
13 equitably resourced and... I will skip down to my last
14 paragraph which is, we don't need to reinvent the
15 wheel, the how and why of desegregation has been
16 measured, debated and detailed. With the authority,
17 tools and effective oversight, each district should
18 be able to begin implementing an array of
19 desegregation programs today. None of them will be
20 perfect, but they can move us closer to the vision of
21 equity and integrated school systems that every... that
22 serves the needs of every student regardless of
23 income level, race, or ability. Thanks for your time.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much,
25 next please.

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2 RUTH MELO: Good afternoon council,
3 Councilman Dromm. It's a pleasure. First of all, my
4 CEC we haven't had a meeting for us to come here, I
5 actually came and emailed everybody I'm coming, I did
6 not let them know that I was going to speak so this
7 is more of a parent within me. I am the Chair of the
8 Diversity Learning Committee and this subject really
9 touches me in the heart. I have an eight-year-old
10 that has HDHD, I have a 21-year-old like in college
11 in Florida, it was a struggle but she's, she's there,
12 thank god. But the problem that I personally am
13 seeing within our community not only district five,
14 district six and several other districts that I have
15 visited. The parents especially the Hispanic, the
16 Arabic, the Asians, the... I can't even start, okay,
17 but... there's so many different races and so many
18 things. There's ADHD kids, ADD kids that have no E...
19 IEP's, there's not enough school supplies, we're
20 getting our art, our music taken away. For my
21 daughter to come and say mom, my school... we have art...
22 like we just draw a picture, we don't have an art
23 teacher teaching me how to make a sun, how to make a
24 dog, you know that gets to me, that gets to me for
25 the reason why, kids... this... with these... I can't even

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2 say disease but what these actions that they have
3 that they grew up with that this is how they were
4 born because it's not a disease, I mean they're still
5 here in this world, they're out here to be something
6 because my thing is when you're living god put you in
7 this world for something and that's why I'm sitting
8 here right now, okay because we need to make a
9 difference. All these actions I've heard, and I've
10 seen them all over the web, I've, I've been doing
11 this for many years because when my daughter went to
12 CEC six I was part of the CEC as well, okay and I did
13 everything I could for my daughter's education and I
14 plan to do the same for my youngest but there is a
15 lot more children that are being let go of what
16 really education should be about, okay. We have
17 teachers that are coming and just saying it doesn't
18 matter to me because I'm still getting a paycheck,
19 what kind of response is that to give to a child? I
20 don't find that adequate at all, I mean my education
21 and my words may not be profound yet, you know I only
22 did two years of college but it's alright, I'm still
23 here and I'm still going and I'm still doing my
24 school online and I'm becoming somebody, why because
25 I want my kids to know that not only them, but I am

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2 somebody and we could all make a difference in this
3 world. I'm sorry because I get really emotional but
4 there's so many things that are missing within our
5 districts. The zoning with elementary school even
6 complicates it, why is it... there's zoning for
7 elementary school, there are no zoning for middle and
8 high school, there's so many things that could be in
9 a different manner that it is not today, you know
10 there's so much change. When I went to school my
11 teacher treated me like I was part of her family, you
12 go to school now they treat you like you're just a
13 nobody and I think that's something that these
14 teachers need to be educated on. They... and my time is
15 up so I mean there's a whole lot I would love to
16 discuss with you and I would leave you email so you...
17 we could try to keep in communication because if I
18 could be a help for you I'll be there for you.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you and thank
20 you for your, your... for your offer for help and don't
21 underestimate the power... the power of parents,
22 parents do have power we just got to funnel it the
23 right way, make parents more... make they strong...
24 [cross-talk]

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2 RUTH MELO: Absolutely and I'm, I'm all
3 for that because in my community I do my own hearing,
4 I have teenagers that... when I was in elementary
5 school and helping a first grade teacher there were
6 so many kids that were doing drugs and I made a
7 community, in community... in district six I have
8 groups of kids that come that to this day, they're
9 21, 22 all because my... back then my name was Burgos,
10 I got married that's why my name is Melo but Miss B.
11 helped me do this, this and that, she helped us, I
12 would ask people, councilmen, people to help me bring
13 prisoners, talk to these kids, let them know what
14 it's about, let them know what it is to go to jail,
15 let them know what it is to stand in the corner, to
16 sell drugs and not have an education and to this day
17 I have graduates that have graduated and still you
18 know they're doing...

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well thank you and
20 we... that's why we need people like you, advocates
21 like you in the community, thank you. Alright, our,
22 our, our student over here, yes.

23 KAIRA WATTS-BEY: Hi.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Hi.

25

1
2 KAIRA WATTS-BEY: Good afternoon ladies
3 and gentlemen. My name is Kaira Watts-Bey, I'm a
4 senior at Urban Assembly school for Criminal Justice
5 High School. I just want to thank you guys and
6 Generation Citizen as well, but they weren't able to
7 stay for providing me with the platform to speak
8 about my class' Action Civics project which is racial
9 inequality and underrepresentation in New York City
10 public schools. To give some background, Generation
11 Citizen is a program designed to get civics education
12 back into middle and high school classrooms in an
13 action oriented way and empower young leaders to
14 exercise their civic duties. Generation Citizen
15 partners with schools to offer a twice weekly action
16 civics class to educate secondary students about how
17 to confront and take effective action to address
18 community issues by engaging directly with politics.
19 I am participating in Generation Citizen this
20 semester in my Government class. A majority of my... of
21 the students at my school are Southeast Asian.
22 Throughout my freshman, sophomore, and junior years I
23 noticed how although we were all coexisting with each
24 other, we lacked unification. I observed how students
25 were afraid to step out of their comfort zones,

1
2 myself included, and felt more comfortable being
3 friends with other students that were of the same
4 ethnicity as them. one of my African American friends
5 told me she even heard other girls using the word
6 Kaali to describe her, which one of my Pakistani
7 peers explained to me is an offensive term used in
8 her culture to describe people of darker skin.
9 Minorities such as African Americans, Hispanics, and
10 Caucasians at my school don't have their voices heard
11 when it comes to voting for school activities. If
12 others aren't willing to listen to them, then their
13 voices continue to go unheard due to lack of
14 representation. This year for example, all five of
15 our homecoming nominees who are voted for by the
16 students were of the same ethnic group. I was shocked
17 at the outcome of, of the ballot because it didn't
18 accurately represent our school's diverse community,
19 so I knew something had to be done. My Generation
20 Citizen college volunteer, who we call a Democracy
21 Coach, Nia has helped my class construct an effective
22 Action Civics plan to address racial inequality and
23 under representation in our school and create
24 structural change. We came up with the idea of having
25 a yearly student retreat to unify the students. The

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2 trip would consist of breaking off into small groups
3 to have a chance to talk about issues students face
4 at school as well as teach others about their
5 culture, religion or sexuality that... so that way
6 misconceptions and stereotypes can be avoided. The
7 best way to unify the students was to show them how
8 they are more similar to each other than they may
9 have originally thought. The Student Retreat would
10 also have a few team building games to lighten the
11 mood after such intense conversations. The hopes were
12 that if the students can be more open and communicate
13 with each other there would be less separation at
14 school. If your principal approves this plan it will
15 give the opportunity to educate all of the students
16 on the different religions, cultures and sexualities
17 that they may have not been familiar with, as well as
18 build new friendships. We hope that other schools and
19 districts can take the same efforts we are in making
20 bridge building and diversity efforts a priority to
21 ensure we are learning in spaces where everyone is
22 equally represented and included. Thank you again for
23 providing the opportunity to testify at today's
24 hearing. I would be happy to answer any questions you
25

1
2 may have about my action project or participation in
3 Generation Citizen class this semester.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well thank you for
5 coming in and thank you for waiting for so long to
6 give testimony too and I'm actually very familiar
7 with Generation Citizen because I have them in a
8 school in IS 230 in Jackson Heights and the lesson
9 that you referred to is a similar lesson to what the
10 teacher taught in the classroom there in Jackson
11 Heights and she broke up the kids into different
12 groups and they talked all about the different isms
13 so to speak; homophobia, anti-Latino sentiment, anti...
14 kids with disabilities, etcetera and brought them all
15 together and then asked what was the common thread
16 there, you know and of course its prejudice and
17 discrimination and so it was a really wonderful way
18 to bring kids together to talk about the commonality
19 of what it is that they face in terms of
20 discrimination in the schools but yet how they could
21 overcome those obstacles as well. So, I'm really
22 thankful to you for bringing up those issues and for
23 mentioning Generation Citizen, which the council has
24 also invested in with a... with a large sum of money in
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the last budget as well. So, thank you for coming in.
I... [cross-talk]

KAIRA WATTS-BEY: You're welcome...

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah, I need to move along folks, I have a million questions to ask but I can't get to it now. I still have four or five panels left, thank you. Alright, Grant Cowles, Citizens Committee for Children; Chanera Pierce, Fair Housing Justice Center; Jose Miranda, The Fair Play Coalition; Sonia Park, Diverse Charter School Coalition; and Community... Allison Keil, Community Roots. And the next panel, next will be Miriam Nunberg, is she here? Where's Miriam, okay, so you'll be in the next. Reyan Mehran, okay, thank you. Antonia Farraro, okay. Shaindy Weichman; Ali Yafid [sp?], may have left, Ari Hershkowitz, Ali Yafid, oh you're here, okay, are you both here? Okay, just... okay, very good and Naftuli Moster, he left? Okay, alright, you'll be on the next panel. Alright, this panel... Yafid why don't you come to this panel, Ari, why don't you come up now. Okay, I'm going to ask you to please raise your right hand. Do you solemnly swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth and to answer Council

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2 Member questions honestly? Okay, should we start over
3 here?

4 GRANT COWLES: Good afternoon, my name is
5 Grant Cowles and I'm the Senior Policy Associate for
6 Youth Justice at Citizens Committee for Children. CCC
7 is an independent multi-issue child advocacy
8 organization dedicated to ensuring every New York
9 child is healthy, housed, educated and safe. We
10 greatly appreciate the City Council and, and the
11 Council Member for holding this hearing to better
12 understand the current state of diversity in city's
13 public-school system. My written testimony provides a
14 slew of analysis and recommendations but for the sake
15 of verbal remarks I'll keep it to the things that
16 haven't been mentioned today. One thing that hasn't
17 been highlighted as much is the concentration of
18 segregated schools. Eighty percent of schools in the
19 Bronx are segregated including 100 percent of the
20 schools in District seven. In Brooklyn overall, 54
21 percent of schools are segregated but that level of
22 segregation is much higher in certain districts.
23 District 23, 100 percent segregated. District 18, 94
24 percent segregated. District 32, 93 percent
25 segregated. CCC keeps track of a child well being

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2 through the Community Risk Ranking that's published
3 yearly and it's perhaps no surprise that those are
4 the exact neighborhoods with the highest risk level
5 for child wellbeing. CCC's recommendations echo much
6 of what's been mentioned today and we support the
7 city's initial attempts to improve diversity and
8 there have been several notable initiatives. Some of
9 the highlights that we wanted to also echo was the,
10 the... one of the key ones is in strengthening the DOE
11 Diversity Plan notably the 50,000 metric, we
12 recommend expanding open enrollment and controlled
13 choice admissions policies. We recommend that all
14 diversity initiatives should include and have a
15 strong emphasis on community involvement. We
16 emphasize and in... and recommend increasing diversity
17 at the specialized high schools. And one thing that
18 hasn't been mentioned as much today is to... we, we
19 recommend ensuring that pre-kindergarten and 3K
20 programs do not unintentionally segregate students.
21 Right now, we have a system of segregation
22 unfortunately, one of the unintended consequences of
23 the Pre-K expansion and now the creation of 3K is
24 that the lower income children are now clustered in
25 early learning classrooms and which are often times

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2 in the same buildings where they have classrooms of
3 very different socioeconomic status. Thank you for
4 the opportunity to testify.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Boy you're going to
6 get an A-plus, 41 seconds left, okay, thank you. And
7 I don't mean to make light of it, but I do appreciate
8 it, yeah, thank you, next please.

9 CHANERA PIERCE: Alright. My name is
10 Chanera Pierce and I'm the Policy Coordinator for the
11 Fair Housing Justice Center. We are a regional civil
12 rights organization based in New York City and we
13 work to eliminate housing discrimination and support
14 policies and programs that foster more open,
15 accessible and inclusive communities. I speak on
16 behalf of FHJC to support Integrate NYC, New York
17 Appleseed and the Alliance for School Integration and
18 Desegregation by affirming policies that reduce
19 school segregation and creating more inclusive
20 communities. The FHJC applauds the Five R framework
21 that the Integrate NYC students use to address
22 racism, discrimination and desegregation within their
23 schools and we would like to offer up a 6th R;
24 Residential segregation. Research tells us that where
25 you live often dictates the opportunity... what

1
2 opportunities and access to resources that you will
3 have, and it impacts the long term trajectory of your
4 life. Children who live in high poverty, racially
5 isolated communities often face social and economic
6 disadvantages that do not properly equip them to
7 succeed in the classroom. These very same students
8 are often overrepresented in lower performing, under-
9 resourced schools thus widening the achievement gap
10 and limiting their future mobility. It is difficult
11 to desegregate schools if we do not desegregate our
12 communities as well. Therefor education policy is
13 housing policy and it is critical that we address
14 them together to create and sustain inclusive, high
15 performing schools in every neighborhood. Despite the
16 fact that the Fair Housing Act provided tools to
17 eliminate housing discrimination and reduce
18 residential segregation, both persist at alarming
19 levels. Families of color still face significant
20 barriers when attempting to move into, to areas of
21 opportunity so that they're children can attend high
22 performing schools. These discriminatory barriers not
23 only sustain segregated schools, but they have given
24 NYC the dubious distinction of being the third most
25 segregated city for African Americans and the second

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2 most segregated city for Asians and Latinos. We need
3 policies and programs that will expand housing
4 opportunities, such as siting more affordable housing
5 in predominately white, low poverty neighborhoods;
6 enacting a co-op disclosure law; creating a regional
7 mobility assistance program that will enable families
8 with rental subsidies to move into opportunity rich
9 areas and of course vigorously enforcing fair housing
10 law to eliminate persistent... and, and systemic
11 housing discrimination. Residential segregation is
12 one cause of, of school segregation but it is not the
13 only cause. School's choice system reinforces
14 segregation in our public schools through it's
15 academic screening processes that allow white and
16 affluent families to attend certain schools while
17 relegating low income families of color to others.
18 When low income families of colors are eliminating...
19 I'm sorry, are limited to under resourced segregated
20 elementary and middle schools they cannot be expected
21 to advance through the high school screening process
22 and gain access to high, high performing high
23 schools. A discriminatory educational system harms
24 students and segregated schools impede efforts to
25

1
2 create more integrated communities throughout New
3 York City. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

5 JOSE MIRANDA: Good afternoon. My name is
6 Jose Miranda and today I'm here on behalf of the Fair
7 Play Coalition, a coalition of students, teachers,
8 parents, and advocates seeking to transform the
9 Public School Athletic League policies to ensure
10 equal access to high school after school athletic
11 sports and to all athletic fields and courts
12 controlled by the New York City Department of
13 Education. I'm a lifetime New Yorker, a third-year
14 student at Columbia Law School and an avid runner.
15 The issue of equal access to sports is at the center
16 of today's conversation about school diversity and
17 the need for greater school integration. Currently
18 after school sports are far more available to more
19 integrated public high schools meaning that those
20 with higher percentage of white students have more
21 sports teams. The students... the, the students at
22 segregated schools often have very few options of
23 after school sports to participate in. This unfair
24 reality is exactly what has brought together the
25 members of Fair Play. I joined Fair Play because I

1
2 know firsthand of the importance of after school
3 sports and I know the impact it can have on a high
4 school student. I remember clearly the first time I
5 felt empowered through recreation, it was the final
6 indoor track meet of my freshman year of high school.
7 Before the start of my race my coach pulled me aside
8 to say take a chance, I believe in you, I didn't win
9 but I did push myself harder than I ever had before.
10 When I crossed the finish line shoulder to shoulder
11 with the winner it set free a latent source of
12 courage and self confidence which has served me all
13 my life and helped me... helped bring me to where I am
14 today. Running helped me develop leadership, teamwork
15 and time management skills. It gave me a distinct
16 advantage on college applications and it was a
17 healthy outlet during trying moments in my life.
18 Running also instilled in me a deep appreciation for
19 physical activity more generally. It is proven that
20 regular physical activity has many physiological and
21 psychosocial benefits; it mitigates stress, reduces
22 chronic diseases like obesity and heart disease,
23 improves self-esteem, mood and mental acuity, and
24 fosters inclusion and community. So, during my
25 internship this past summer at New York Lawyers for

1
2 the Public Interest when I learned that not all
3 students are fair... afforded a fair opportunity to
4 engage in recreation I was deeply disappointed. When
5 I learned that 111 NYC public high schools offer zero
6 sports teams and that black and Latino students are
7 twice as likely to attend one of those schools
8 resulting in 17,000 students of color attending a
9 school with no sports teams, I was troubled because I
10 know that access to recreation is much more than just
11 access to recreation, it's an opportunity for
12 students to thrive. Today I take this opportunity to
13 speak about the inequitable access to sports teams
14 based on race that is a sad but very real byproduct
15 of the segregation we still see in today's schools
16 because as we discuss school integration we must
17 ensure that we move toward fair distribution of
18 resources, recreational and academic alike. Deep down
19 we all know that a child's ability to thrive should
20 not depend on the zip code they live in or the color
21 of their skin but in 2017, today in New York City
22 that is the case. Our city has a chance to show our
23 kids that we believe in equity and ensuring they're
24 success, that Fair Play Coalition fully supports

1
2 diversity in New York schools and everyone here
3 should too. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you for your
5 contribution to that discussion and I don't know if
6 you heard the questioning of the other person who
7 gave testimony regarding small schools versus the
8 larger schools and the PSAL versus the small school's
9 athletic league...

10 JOSE MIRANDA: Uh-huh...

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: But yeah, do you have
12 any comment on that, any insight on that, I was
13 asking basically if there... if the situation in the
14 small schools is worse than in the large schools,
15 they seemed to indicate that discrimination was
16 pretty high even in the larger schools in terms of
17 sports?

18 JOSE MIRANDA: Yeah, that's the case and
19 my sense is that generally smaller schools are worse
20 off.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Uh-huh, okay, thank
22 you, appreciate that. Yes... next please.

23 SONIA PARK: He's being a gentleman and
24 let... at letting us go before him. [clears throat]
25 excuse me... good afternoon, my name is Sonia Park, I'm

1
2 the Executive Director of the Diverse Charter Schools
3 Coalition and also a member of the Alliance for
4 School Integration and Desegregation. We believe like
5 the New York City DOE that all students benefit from
6 diverse, inclusive schools and classrooms but as we
7 all know and has been discussed thoroughly today that
8 New York City public schools do not always reflect
9 the diversity of the city or the diversity of the
10 communities in which they are located. New York's
11 diverse public charter schools are ready to partner
12 with and contribute their experiences as part of the
13 solution. I am hopeful that steps are now being taken
14 that are more inclusive to charter schools and the
15 families they serve. Our New York... our New York
16 diverse charter school stakeholders have proven
17 strategies to tackle segregation. Working against
18 some, sometimes daunting odds these school leaders,
19 teachers, community organizations and parents have
20 shown that it is possible to provide public school
21 students with supportive and effective learning
22 environments that are also diverse. Charter schools
23 often get blamed for contributing to segregation of
24 public schools and I want to emphasize, correlation
25 is not causation. In our member schools which we

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2 represent over 100 individual diverse by design
3 public charter schools in 14 states and in DC. We
4 serve over 25,000 students demonstrating how charters
5 are positioned to push back on the forces that have
6 contributed to school segregation and this is long
7 before charter schools have come about. In our
8 community's diverse schools can invigorate and
9 strengthen urban neighborhoods by breaking down the
10 cultural walls that divide us and diversity can be
11 achieved through deliberate efforts via recruitment,
12 admission policies, and school design. The impact can
13 be powerful proving greater opportunities for
14 students to learn from one another and boost
15 achievement. In New York City charter schools can
16 draw students from a wider area, overcome structural
17 impediments behind one of the true causes at school
18 segregation which is neighborhood and housing
19 segregation. Charters can enroll students from across
20 an entire community school district and are not bound
21 by enrollment zones. For example, Brooklyn Prospect
22 Charter School uses a weighted lottery to give
23 preferences to students from low income communities
24 which helps ensure a mixture of socioeconomic status
25 and ethnicities in its elementary and middle schools

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2 and high school. Brooklyn Prospect High School
3 enrolls... enrollment reflects the diversity of the
4 community which it serves. The, the student
5 population that is 40 percent Hispanic, 11 percent
6 African American, 31 percent white, eight percent
7 Asian and eight percent multi-ethnic. Another example
8 is Community Roots Charter School, it's co-founder
9 and co-directed Allison Keil, who's sitting to my
10 right, has worked for the past 12 years to ensure
11 that their student body reflects... is reflective of
12 their... and representative of the school district of
13 which they're located which is CSD 13. Charters have
14 more flexibility to design their curriculum, offer
15 family supports and take other steps to meet the
16 education needs of a diverse student body. Together
17 these advantages allow charters to be more nimble,
18 innovative and creative when it comes to creating
19 schools with higher levels of economic and racial
20 diversity. Diverse... I will just end by saying that we
21 need the Mayor and the DOE to move this important
22 work beyond just talk and we need to have hard
23 conversations with an eye towards action... then an
24 ascended vision of a diverse public-school system can
25 advance towards reality. Thank you very much.

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CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I just have to question you a little bit...

SONIA PARK: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Charter schools by, by their nature have a selection process...

SONIA PARK: It's a lottery process.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: It's a lottery process, so by that process in itself therefor you can control the, the, the people who go to the school basically?

SONIA PARK: It's an open process, lottery process, charters can... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Excuse me, as you know the public schools are dealing with a different population than those who... [cross-talk]

SONIA PARK: We are all serving... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...have the smarts... [cross-talk]

SONIA PARK: ...public school students... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Wait, hold on a second because I'm... [cross-talk]

SONIA PARK: Yes... [cross-talk]

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CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...I'm in charge here,
right... [cross-talk]

SONIA PARK: Okay...

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, they have a
different process by which children enter those
schools than the regular public school... [cross-talk]

SONIA PARK: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, for you to say
that you're not to blame to me seems but you can
counter me on this, that it's similar to the argument
the DOE's offering which is that they don't want to
use the word segregation, do you admit that the
charter schools are segregated?

SONIA PARK: Charter schools are
reflective that their neighborhood and the
communities that they're actually in... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: But they're
segregated?

SONIA PARK: In comparison to the
district schools where they're actually sitting next
to, charter schools can pull from a swath of CSD's. I
think we, we can... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, so you're not...
[cross-talk]

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SONIA PARK: ...definitely have this...

[cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...you're not going to...

[cross-talk]

SONIA PARK: ...conversation offline...

[cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...so, you're just as guilty... to me right now you're just as guilty as the... as the district schools who have come in, the district... the, the, the Department of Ed not wanting to admit that the schools are segregated.

SONIA PARK: Charter schools are schools of choice, if a parent chooses to place their child in culturally appropriate atmosphere that's their choice, the difference with the DOE is that parents don't have a choice a lot of times that they're going to an assigned district school, there's a difference.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: How does that impact segregation, what are you talking about... it, it would negatively impact if they have a choice, if you're only... and you're selecting those who come into the school and you... what about... there are many examples of choice as a matter of... there are many examples of, of discrimination so for ELLs charter schools have a

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2 lower number of ELLs, charter schools have a lower
3 number of, of special education students, charter
4 schools and to... some of the promoters of charter
5 schools for example they claim that they teach all
6 black and Latino students, right?

7 SONIA PARK: Yes...

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, they're
9 segregated.

10 SONIA PARK: Charter schools have done in
11 this city also weighted lotteries where they give
12 preferences to schools... to students that would be
13 considered at risk, whether that is designation by
14 FRL status, by zip code, by English Language Learners
15 status, students with disabilities, there are a
16 number of examples across the city of charter schools
17 that have given this preference to students that
18 choose to apply to be in those schools.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well I hope that in
20 the discussion moving forward... [cross-talk]

21 SONIA PARK: Yes... [cross-talk]

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...and in terms of the,
23 the group... the Advisory Group that's being
24 established that those who represent the charter
25 schools would be at least willing to make the

1
2 admission that we're also asking the district schools
3 to make here, I'm not treating them different but
4 that the charter schools are just as segregated as
5 the public schools. Thank you.

6 ALLISON KEIL: Hi, can you hear me? My
7 name is Allison Keil, I'm Co-founder and Co-director
8 of Community Roots Charter School. We're located in
9 District 13 and I want to speak to some of what
10 you're bringing up. So, we opened 12 years ago with a
11 mission to desegregate as part of my school's mission
12 and that mission has been actualized. So, my school
13 is diverse by design and represents the district in
14 which we're located in. We happen to sit right in
15 between some of the biggest public housing
16 developments within my district and we serve that
17 community as well as a big influx of gentrifies in
18 our community. When we began to see the gentrifies
19 over weighing our lottery, meaning we were getting
20 more applications from that population we put a
21 weight in our lottery, so we have a 40 percent set
22 aside for children with... children living in poverty.
23 We also serve 26 percent of our population that has
24 special needs which is way above my district
25 population. I want to talk about the lessons we've

1
2 learned along the way and we've learned a lot of
3 them. One thing that we've learned is that you have
4 to be intentional about your work to desegregate so
5 we arm our teachers and we do tons of professional
6 development around what it means to have an anti-bias
7 and culturally responsive curriculum and that takes a
8 lot of work, but I don't want that work to be only
9 situated within the four walls of my school but
10 instead of replicating which many charters decide to
11 do we decided to start our... an arm of our school
12 called Roots Connected. What Roots Connected does is
13 it works with district public schools as well as
14 charter schools to talk about best practices. When
15 you're talking about best practices and when you're
16 talking about classroom practices all of that
17 political... the political barriers that get in the way
18 of district public school educators talking to
19 charter school, public school educators drop and what
20 we've found is we just ran a three-day social justice
21 institute that talked about best practices in
22 classrooms. In that social justice institute were
23 district public high schools, charter school K-8's
24 and educators from Louisiana as well. When you put
25 all of those educators together and you're talking

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2 about best practices in classrooms around
3 desegregation and around anti-bias curriculum the
4 work can really get done across those sectors.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I agree 100 percent
6 with what you said, thank you. Next please.

7 ARI HERSHKOWITZ: Good afternoon, my name
8 is Ari Hershkowitz, I'm 20 years old. I've attended
9 Hasidic Yeshivas since I was two and a half years old
10 until I was 18 and I got a very poor secular
11 education. this has been a huge obstacle for me as
12 I'm working towards getting a bachelors degree in
13 computer science without a high school diploma. But,
14 the topic here is about diversity, so let's talk
15 about that. Not only was there diversity in the
16 school I went to, it was 100 percent white, 100
17 percent male and orthodox. The only people I was
18 exposed to who weren't orthodox, white males were the
19 janitors. That the studies we learned taught me that
20 people who aren't Jewish are here to serve the chosen
21 people and they have no other purpose in being here.
22 Not only was there no diversity in school among
23 students and staff, but I also never learned about
24 anyone else in my studies. Elementary school was
25 almost solely Judaic studies, the English and math

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2 were insignificant and scoffed at by both the
3 students and the uncertified staff. There were never
4 any consequences for not attending the classes or
5 taking the tests. When I was 12, secular education
6 was completely stopped, and we spent the entire day
7 on Judaic studies which are not diverse to say the
8 least. In fact, we were constantly taught that we are
9 the chosen people and minorities are not on our
10 level. I'll give one example here; I just want to
11 clarify this is not opinion, this is what I was
12 taught, we learned as part of the story of Noah's Ark
13 that Noah cursed his son Ham and the curse was that
14 his descendants for generations to come will be black
15 and they'll forever be slaves. Even though Hasidic
16 Judaism doesn't have slaves nowadays, it is only
17 because the law prohibits it, and not because of the
18 immorality of slavery. We're constantly told as kids
19 that when the messiah will come, the minorities and
20 non-Jews will be our slaves again. With such an
21 education, or rather lack thereof, how can we expect
22 these kids to grow up and be tolerant and empathetic
23 towards non-orthodox Jews; let alone towards non-
24 Jews? When kids are constantly told that women are
25 not equal to men, for example, their mothers are not

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2 allowed to have a driver license and women are not to
3 lead and be in charge of anything, how can we expect
4 these kids to not grow up being sexist? When kids are
5 being told repeatedly about the sin of homosexuality
6 and the consequences of it, including the punishment
7 of being stoned to death, how can we expect these
8 kids to not grow up homophobic and discriminatory
9 towards the LGBT community? These things must be
10 repaired. If only the city were to do its job and
11 enforce the law, these kids would at the very least
12 get another perspective. They would learn of the
13 abhorrent history of slavery, they would learn of the
14 women's movement, the... and the civil rights movements
15 and so on. It is unacceptable that, that in this
16 progressive city, kids are learning such hate and are
17 not learning the basic tolerance and understanding
18 towards others. It took me a few years to register
19 that what I knew as a kid is disastrously wrong, I
20 struggled to see others as human beings, deserving of
21 a chance in life. We're getting close to 2018 here,
22 sexism, racism and homophobia should not continue to
23 thrive in New York City as they do in Satmar, the
24 Hasidic school... the Hasidic Yeshiva that I went to. I
25 urge you all to take immediate action and to work on

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2 making sure that this doesn't go on anymore. I hope
3 that the great importance of this will finally be
4 realized, politics will be put aside, which politics
5 by the way has been stalling this for many years and
6 the next round of students graduating Satmar do not
7 dislike, disregard or even hate people for simply
8 being black, gay or different from them in any way.
9 Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much
11 and thank you for your courage to come in and to
12 speak on that issue, I really deeply appreciate it
13 and as you know I've been working closely with the...
14 on this issue and we're going to continue to push for
15 a thorough investigation of the issues that you have
16 raised here again so... thank you very much for coming
17 in. And thank you to the whole panel for coming in, I
18 appreciate it... [cross-talk]

19 ALLISON KEIL: Thank you... [cross-talk]

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank, thank you.
21 Okay, Miriam Nunberg, District 15, Parents of Middle
22 School Equity... Parents for Middle School Equity;
23 Reyhan Mehran, for Carrie McLaren, District 15
24 Coalition for Equitable Schools; Antonia Farraro, CEC
25 15; Michele Greenberg, PS 372. Uh-huh. Is Elliotte

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2 Simian here? Teresa Yi, come on up, yep. Is CEJ here?
3 Chevion Weaks-Lopez; DeJohn, DeJohn Jones; Felicia
4 Alexander? Natasha Capers is not here... Chevion Weaks-
5 Lopez, no... and DeJohn Jones is twice... okay. Alright,
6 we'll do this panel. Sorry, can I ask you to raise
7 your right hand please? Do you solemnly swear or
8 affirm... lady... yep? Need to swear you in, okay. We
9 have this rule because in the past we've had issues,
10 so I do take it seriously. So, do you solemnly swear
11 or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and
12 nothing but the truth and to answer Council Member
13 questions honestly? Thank you very much. Okay,
14 should we start here? Ma'am just turn that mic on,
15 the red light should be on.

16 MIRIAM NUNBERG: Yeah, did it start
17 working? Yeah.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yep, that's good.

19 MIRIAM NUNBERG: Okay, I'll start again.
20 My name is Miriam Nunberg. Thank you for the
21 opportunity to testify today. I am a Co-founder of
22 District 15 Parents for Middle School Equity and a
23 member of The Alliance for School Integration and
24 Desegregation. I testify today in opposition to the
25 DOE's current exclusionary assignment practices and

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2 in support of the Five R's of integration as defined
3 by the amazing students of Integrate NYC. Their
4 comprehensive approach goes far beyond the tepid
5 plans set, set forth by the DOE. We support Middle
6 School Admissions Reform in particular as a step with
7 potentially great impact in District 15 and
8 elsewhere. Despite District 15's racial and
9 socioeconomic diversity our middle schools remain
10 segregated. These public schools screen thousands of
11 fifth graders for academics along with inherently
12 biased criteria such as attendance and behavior. One
13 must ask why this is an acceptable use of limited
14 resources and why we allow our public schools to hand
15 pick their students selecting for characteristics so
16 highly correlated with race and socioeconomic status.
17 The result of middle school choice in District 15 is
18 that despite districtwide admissions, the three most
19 competitive schools accept 70 percent of all white
20 students, over 77 percent of those scoring level four
21 on the state ELA exams and just five percent of the
22 English Language Learners. In contrast the three
23 schools attended by 64 percent of the district's,
24 district's Latino students enroll over 60 percent of
25 those scoring a level four and 77 percent of all the

1
2 English Language Learners. This is classic de facto
3 segregation. A recent IBO study demonstrated that
4 where a student attends middle school significantly
5 impacts where she... he or she attends high school.
6 Greater middle school equity thus has a potential to
7 transform the segregated high school landscape as
8 well, yet the Mayor's current diversity plan
9 disappointingly preserves middle school screening and
10 choice missing an opportunity for integration on the
11 secondary level. The DOE thus continues to prioritize
12 competition and exclusion over equity and inclusion.
13 To create actual equity the DOE must adopt the Five
14 R's which recognize that real integration requires a
15 new inclusionary vision of student assignment based
16 on cross sector collaboration and authentic
17 engagement with the communities most impacted by
18 educational inequity. Integration also means
19 culturally responsive pedagogy, restorative justice,
20 meaningful heterogeneous groupings, diverse hiring,
21 and resource equity. Additionally, it is crucial that
22 the School Diversity Accountability Act be amended to
23 include applicants to screened schools and programs
24 by racial and socioeconomic status, as well as a more
25 robust measure of socioeconomic status than free and

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2 reduced lunch and does not include all students at
3 universal free lunch schools. Finally, if the city is
4 serious about integration and equity, it must require
5 high level leadership and accountability from the DOE
6 again at the Deputy Chancellor level. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you,
8 thank you very much, next please.

9 FELICIA ALEXANDER: Hi, I'm speaking on
10 behalf of the Coalition for Equitable Schools in
11 Brooklyn's District 15. Our group formed last spring
12 to help spark dialogue around elementary school
13 segregation. When we think about school integration
14 we can't ignore that some of the most racially and
15 socioeconomically segregated schools in the city are
16 elementary schools. By the time students reach sixth
17 grade most of them have already been in segregated
18 schools for seven years. Any reforms put in place
19 that only address middle and high school admissions
20 are bound to be superficial, everyone benefits when
21 diverse groups of learners are actively and
22 thoughtfully integrated at a young age. It's said
23 that zoning and residential patterns prevent
24 elementary level reform. The Mayor has said equity
25 sharing of PTA funds like is done in Portland, Oregon

1
2 is also politically untenable, we need to stop
3 focusing on barriers and start acknowledging the
4 problem and making a real effort for change. Creating
5 more equitable schools can happen in any number of
6 ways. We'd urge the DOE to be guided by Integrate
7 NYC's Five R's. This can't be simply about moving
8 bodies from one school to another, you could make...
9 take a majority black and Hispanic school and a
10 majority white school and mix them but if it's not
11 done with intention and planning and a well trained
12 and diverse staff you'll just repeat the same
13 patterns and you may even make things worse. We've
14 seen this in the DOE's gifted programs where affluent
15 kids are presumed to be the smart and high achieving
16 and black and brown kids, English Language Learners
17 and students in under resourced neighborhoods are
18 presumed to be less able. We are not policy gurus at
19 the District 15 Coalition for Equitable Schools and
20 we don't have all the answers, but we urge you to go
21 beyond superficial reforms outlined in the diversity
22 plan, we need to start rethinking school zoning, we
23 need to be planning systemwide reforms such as... but
24 not limited to controlled... the controlled choice
25 model being used in District One. There are many

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2 parents, teachers, and school leaders who'd like to
3 be part of the solution, please let us.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: You know you
5 mentioned limited choice and even that sometimes
6 gives me a little bit of concern about those who are
7 aware enough to be able to get into certain schools,
8 do you have a, a, a concern for that as well?

9 FELICIA ALEXANDER: Yes, I think it needs
10 to be done in an, an intentional way with a lot of
11 education.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah, I mean I've
13 heard it a couple of times today in the hearing and I
14 haven't really said anything too much about it, but I
15 also worry a little bit about it.

16 FELICIA ALEXANDER: Yeah...

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

18 FELICIA ALEXANDER: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Next please.

20 ANTONIA FERRARO: Good evening and thank
21 you for the opportunity to speak. My name is Antonia
22 Ferraro, I am a member of CEC 15 and PTA Co-president
23 at MS 88 where my eldest attends. I'm speaking today
24 on behalf of myself not CEC 15 though I'm proud to
25 say our CEC prioritizes equity and diversity. The

1
2 school integration discussion unfolds daily and much
3 of that discussion unfortunately revolves around
4 fear. When my son applied to middle schools three
5 years ago, it was clear this was a hunger games like
6 process in which screening for merit or talent
7 function as a proxy for socioeconomic status or race
8 resulting in schools that do not reflect the
9 demographics of the district as a whole. When you see
10 schools with opposite demographics sitting on blocks
11 from one another... sitting blocks from one another
12 it's not on the very same block, you realize housing
13 only explains a portion of why are middle schools are
14 segregated. The fact is in District 15 we have a
15 process that assigns roughly 69 percent of all white
16 students to just three middle schools and 64 percent
17 of Hispanics to three different schools. This is due
18 to the inherent design or flaw, of school choice.
19 When parents are instructed to find the best fit for
20 their child, they are literally being asked to self-
21 segregate and in doing so, limit their own choices.
22 Choice has ironically led to fewer choices. I
23 recently tried to explain this choice paradox to a
24 group of 5th grade parents at a middle school forum.
25 I was asked a question typical of the fears in my

1
2 community. "Your child attends an up and coming
3 school, what made you think your child would thrive
4 there?" In response, I implored the audience to stop
5 viewing schools in real estate terms. I prefer to
6 think of my son's school as the district's best kept
7 secret thanks to this up and coming mindset. As a
8 parent representative, I am tasked with changing
9 mindsets and placating fears. I recently met a boy
10 named Noah at a 6th grade orientation. He asked me a
11 question that stuck with me, "Are the kids here
12 nice?" That was all he was looking for in a middle
13 school. If more parents measured schools by Noah's
14 criterion, I wouldn't be hearing so many resolvable
15 fears surfacing in response to District 15's decision
16 to work with urban planner WXY to better integrate
17 our middle schools. I hear fears that necessary
18 curriculum supports won't be put in place in
19 unscreened environments for G and T's, ESLs and IEPs.
20 I hear fears of voices being tokenized and loss of
21 Title One funds. However, District 15's income
22 demographics suggest every school in the district
23 could be Title One. Screening middle schoolers is
24 simply tracking on a grand scale. But, there is one
25 fear that people don't seem to talk about. Did it

1
2 ever occur to you that if we don't integrate, support
3 for public education will continue to erode and the
4 resource essential to, to democracy may cease to
5 exist for large swaths of society? Segregation only
6 bolsters the school choice movement that threatens to
7 divert funds to vouchers and charters. In the age of
8 DeVos, if we don't use it, we just might lose it. I
9 am hopeful WXY can deliver a streamlined middle
10 school process, with fewer forums and school tours,
11 and completely free of auditions, interviews, and
12 tests. By embracing integration, District 15 will be
13 increasing everyone's choices and eliminating a
14 stressful, time consuming process we all hate. Thank
15 you so much.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I didn't know what
17 you were going to say before you said it so... it was
18 not planned, believe me. Thank you very much, next
19 please.

20 MICHELE GREENBERG: That was great. Hi,
21 my... oh sorry, yep... okay. My name is Michele Greenberg
22 and I'm a parent... and the parent... sorry, I'm the
23 Parent Co-chair of the Diversity Committee at PS 372
24 also called the Children's School in District 15 in
25 Brooklyn. We're a district wide, un-zoned school in

1
2 community school district 15 and one of the original
3 seven schools chosen to participate in the pilot
4 admissions program with the goal of increasing and
5 maintaining diversity at individual schools
6 throughout the city. I believe that this program has
7 been transformational in increasing access to
8 individual schools like ours, but, as I outlined
9 below, schools and districts need more support from
10 DOE with outreach and support to achieve true
11 integration. Moreover, the DOE needs a plan to
12 address school segregation across District 15 that
13 includes input from the youth who have already taken
14 leadership such as Integrate NYC and other
15 stakeholders. What needs to happen in our individual
16 school, which is currently majority white, is that we
17 must do the work to ensure that our school is not
18 just diverse in numbers but is integrated and
19 inclusive in our culture, our staff and curriculum.
20 This means not only doing outreach to neighborhoods
21 and communities in our district that are
22 underrepresented in our school, but making sure we
23 translate communications, have a culturally
24 representative curriculum, provide buddies for new
25 families, invite organizations such as Border

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2 Crossers to do workshops with parents and staff, make
3 sure our after school program is viable as more
4 families are unable to pay the full fee, make sure..
5 make school events affordable to families of all
6 economic means and the list goes on. We lobbied for
7 years to be able to have this admission... an admission
8 system like this and we want to see it succeed in a
9 real way. So far, most of the efforts that we've made
10 in this direction, while supported by our
11 administration, have been parent and teach initiated
12 and run. This means that all of the work I mentioned
13 has been done with volunteer labor using small
14 amounts of funds from the administration for printer..
15 printing flyers and from the PTA for trainings. But
16 we need more support from for DOA to be able... DOE to
17 be able to succeed. We should not have to use PTA
18 funds for this critical work and these important
19 efforts should not be solely the responsibility of
20 parents and staff. We propose that schools working on
21 desegregation be given funds to hire diversity
22 coordinators to oversee all of the above activities
23 as well as network with other schools, produce
24 publicity materials, hire organizations to do anti-
25 racism training for parents, administration and

1
2 staff, produce signage and other translated
3 materials, and develop culturally, culturally
4 responsive curricula. We just have a, a meeting
5 recently, a, a diversity meeting to do outreach and
6 one of the brand-new parents there said that she was
7 shocked that this work was all being done by parents,
8 I mean we have... we have a, a, a staff... a teacher co-
9 chair but basically all of this work is being done
10 with very, very little funding by parents which has
11 always seemed really off to me as well.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well as shocking as
13 it is it's... well I... you know I was a New York City
14 public school teacher for 25 years before I got
15 elected to the city council, I taught fourth grade in
16 Sunny Side well what I found is that any change that
17 happens within the Department of Education usually
18 comes about because of parental involvement and
19 grassroots organizing so... that's what's going to make
20 the difference here and we deeply appreciate what
21 you're doing in your district, it's a... going to be a
22 model I think for the rest of the city. Thank you.

23 TERESA YI: Hello, my name is Teresa Yi
24 and I run a college readiness program in Flatbush in
25 Brooklyn, its pretty small but... so the majority of

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2 students in my program come from two schools in the
3 area. One school is 92 percent black and the other
4 school has a pretty even distribution between black
5 students, Asian students, Hispanic and white
6 students. The school that is more racially diverse
7 has higher achieving minded students. Without knowing
8 which school, a student comes from I, I'm pretty
9 confident that anyone in this room would accurately
10 guess which school that the student came from. The
11 students from the diverse school have more energy,
12 when you speak to them they have more ideas about
13 their future, they're more open. The students that do
14 not have a desegregated environment refer to their
15 school as the stupid school and they talk very
16 negatively about their school. I learned really
17 recently... because I'm born and raised in New Jersey
18 so I'm kind of a new... I'm close to but, you know like
19 a transplant and I learned very recently that 81.7
20 percent of black students in New York City attend
21 segregated school... segregated schools and it's bazaar
22 to me that we pride our, ourselves on being this
23 diverse... the most diverse city in the world and that
24 percentage is ridiculous and I think the problem with
25 our level of segregation is that everyone has already

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2 said all the data and the studies but the, the
3 studies have proven that particularly for black
4 students a desegregated environment for them means 22
5 percent black adults, future adults will be less
6 likely to be incarcerated, they're more likely to
7 have their own students be more successful and those
8 things are also long term issues, right, like
9 education is the way for someone who's born into a
10 crappy situation to kind of be able to, you know
11 switch their trajectory around or at least that's
12 what it's supposed to be. So, it's really
13 disheartening that... to learn like this level of
14 segregation I think its insane. And, and yeah... and I...
15 and I think... I really think this issue is a race
16 issue, probably no one in this room definitely no one
17 in this room, you know would think this way, but I
18 think that there are people who think that there's a
19 perceived threat that once a black student enters a
20 school that it's going to ruin the school and it's
21 going to ruin the school's reputation and the status
22 and that's factually wrong. Studies have shown that
23 that's absolutely wrong and that in fact adults just
24 perpetuate this myth and the story and we're all
25 responsible for it because we just let that be what...

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you know the perception that it is and, and also studies have shown that desegregation actually only helps the black student, it doesn't in... it doesn't hinder a white student's chance at success. So, it's kind of a win, win situation if you look at, you know the studies, so I'll leave it at that but... yeah, so...

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, let me just leave it at this, thank you very much for coming in. I, I just... so many... so many thoughts that come through, through to my mind, you know but thank you I appreciate all of you coming in and sharing your thoughts, thank you.

MICHELE GREENBERG: Thank you... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And I think we're going to have our last panel. Okay, Tish Doggett, okay; Megan Devir; Charisse Smith, come on up; Lisa Millsayer... Millsaps Milsaps; and Bisi Iderabdullah. Uh-huh and just make sure there's nobody here who wants to testify who didn't fill out a slip. Alright, everybody who wants to testify has signed up? Okay. Okay, I'd like to ask both of you to please raise your right hand, so I can swear you in, do you solemnly swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole

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2 truth and nothing but the truth and to answer Council
3 Member questions honestly?

4 CHARISSE SMITH: Yes.

5 LISA MILLSAPS: Yes, yes.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, so where should
7 we start?

8 CHARISSE SMITH: Good evening Council
9 Members and... [cross-talk]

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Good evening... [cross-
11 talk]

12 CHARISSE SMITH: ...thank you for holding
13 this hearing. My name is Charisse Smith, I'm the
14 proud parent of a 9th grader at Medgar Evers College
15 Preparatory School in Crown Heights. I'm a strong
16 believer in the need to desegregate schools as well
17 as diversify them and I see that as something that we
18 should all be working towards in the interest of
19 creating quality education for children who are
20 currently stuck in failing schools. I'm also a parent
21 and my first concern is ensuring that my son gets the
22 best education possible. At Medgar Evers Prep he's
23 getting exactly that. By nearly every measure, Medgar
24 is one of the highest performing schools in the city.
25 Academic performance is double the city average with

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2 84 percent of the students being proficient in
3 reading, 78 percent, percent proficient in math and
4 84 percent take at least one AP class before
5 graduating, 98 percent graduation rate within four
6 years and 22 AP's in the school. Based on those stats
7 you might think that Medgar Evers student body looks
8 a lot like Stuyvesant or NEST-M, but the fact is that
9 99 percent of the students are minority, 71 percent
10 come from low income families and earning a spot at
11 Medgar Evers in my community is a golden ticket and
12 an opportunity to college. The diversity, diversity
13 plan, the Mayor's Diversity Plan speaks to creating
14 diversity in schools where black and brown children
15 would otherwise not have access to quality education
16 that is being provided within schools and across
17 districts. Except Medgar Prep is a citywide school,
18 students come from 61 different zip codes. The
19 students also speak, come from backgrounds where the
20 native language is Mandarin, Spanish, Creole, Bengali
21 and many other languages. Nine percent of our
22 student's body have disabilities, we are a diverse
23 population outside of race yet the Mayor has decided
24 they.. he wants to target our school in terms of the
25 application process which will take the choice away

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2 from parents in terms of being able to come to this
3 school. It's taking the voice and the choice away
4 from parents. For 16 years Medgar Evers has had a
5 rigorous admissions process and parents want to make
6 sure that those standards remain in place. The
7 Mayor's plan wants to take control of the admission
8 process through a so called centralized ranking
9 claiming it will make the process fair and accessible
10 to everyone. Parents at Medgar Evers fear it will do
11 just the opposite and this change will undo the long-
12 standing success of this school. We don't believe
13 that schools situated similarly across the city are
14 relinquishing their control as a matter of fact the
15 plan shows that the DOE plans to eliminate the
16 centralized ranking in districts one, two, three,
17 four, five, 13 and 15 while putting that same
18 centralized process in place at Medgar Evers
19 supposedly to create equity. Now I know I ran out of
20 time, so I will just sum it up by saying why doesn't
21 the Mayor replicate what's happening at Medgar Evers
22 across the city if you truly want to create equity,
23 if you truly want to diversify things in a way that
24 creates true opportunity for students leave Medgar
25 Evers alone, we're an open school, we're a citywide

1
2 school. Students from across the city are open to
3 apply to Medgar Evers, we don't discriminate, if you
4 have the grades you absolutely can apply, there are
5 family schools that the Mayor absolutely should be
6 focusing on bringing up to speed.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Now your principal
8 was here a few weeks ago for another hearing..

9 CHARISSE SMITH: Okay... [cross-talk]

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...but... and he
11 described a little bit of the situation but just
12 refresh my memory in terms of what is the application
13 process, how does somebody go about applying to get
14 into Medgar Evers?

15 CHARISSE SMITH: So, the application
16 process is you get an application from the school,
17 you apply to the school, you submit your grades, you
18 come, and you take a test, each student takes a test,
19 once you finish taking the test if you pass the test
20 you are inviting, invited in for an interview and
21 then based on that students are selected on their
22 performance on the test as well as the interviewing
23 process. They talk not just to the students, they
24 also talk to the parents to get a sense of the need,
25 the desire, there's a strong parent component

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2 involved, it's necessary because we are not a middle
3 school high school, we are an early high school,
4 early college model, where all middle school students
5 take high school classes and all high school class...
6 students are expected to take college classes. My
7 child is in the 9th grade, he's already taking AP
8 classes and has passed eight regents.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you very
10 much, I appreciate it.

11 LISA MILLSAPS: Good afternoon everyone...

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Good afternoon.

13 LISA MILLSAPS: Sorry that there's
14 probably only like four people in here aside from the
15 council and everyone else that's here. Thank you for
16 granting me the opportunity to testify. My name is
17 Lisa Millsaps before you and discuss the need to
18 maintain Medgar Evers College Preparatory School
19 Admissions Applications Process, academic rigor as
20 well as provide more financial support and physical
21 space at this excellent school. As an educator,
22 scholar and parent, my husband Hashim Muhammad-Graham
23 and who has... there's a, a letter on behalf of him to
24 also represent the school as well and myself have
25 three children in grades 6th, 10th and 12th grade that

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2 currently attend the school. We the Medgar Evers
3 Preparatory School community are appalled that after
4 several emails and phone calls from many parents at
5 Medgar Evers Preparatory School and the local
6 community have not received any type of response from
7 Mayor De Blasio directly nor Chancellor Farina to our
8 invitation to have a town hall at Medgar Evers
9 Preparatory School. There is an urgent need to
10 discuss the persistent direct attacks on Medgar Evers
11 Preparatory School to change the school's pedagogy,
12 the structure and positionality within the DOE
13 starting 2019. What happened to parent voice and
14 parent choice, this cannot be disregarded any longer.
15 First the current city-wide admissions application
16 process should remain intact. Reason number one,
17 according to the Diploma Disparities, high school
18 graduation rates in New York City report which was
19 September 22nd, of 2016 by the New York City
20 Comptroller confirms that among the low socioeconomic
21 communities particularly Bronx and... Bronx and
22 Brooklyn students are not college ready. The report
23 recommendation was to support and further fund
24 existing college ready programs throughout the city.
25 Medgar Evers Preparatory School is one of those early

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2 college programs that needs to be modeled and
3 replicated in all districts and further financially
4 supported. It is a total disservice to any community
5 to not offer varied quality education programs that
6 allow students to have an opportunity to an enriched
7 program that promotes college readiness from entry at
8 6th to, to graduation and that's the 12th grade.
9 Second, the academic rigor should be maintained.
10 Reason number two is personal for both my husband and
11 I that have two children with disabilities that
12 currently attend Medgar Evers Preparatory School and
13 happened to be doing phenomenally well because of the
14 support despite the DOE attacks that claim our school
15 does not create spaces in the school structure for
16 students with disabilities. Charisse Smith who's
17 sitting right next to me, article, Mr. Mayor, leave
18 Medgar Evers College Preparatory School alone,
19 reports why our citywide school should be left alone
20 but that we have an... at minimum nine percent of the
21 student population with varied disabilities that are
22 enrolled at Medgar Evers Preparatory School and we
23 have a variety of multi-language speakers also
24 enrolled at our school. In short, we are not only
25 diverse culturally, but we serve all kinds of

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2 scholars from different backgrounds and socioeconomic
3 situations. We urge the DOE, the Council, the Mayor's
4 Office, the Chancellor's Office and all stakeholders
5 to listen to the voice in the letter... in this letter,
6 we also request that you read this letter carefully
7 along with other requests from parents at Medgar
8 Evers Preparatory School. Finally, that all
9 stakeholders and all education leaders in New York
10 City and State re-read Diploma Disparities; High
11 School Graduation Rates, which is the article I spoke
12 about earlier. We thank you for the opportunity again
13 to testify and hopefully a conversation will begin on
14 a path for real democracy and education and to
15 rethink what DOE wants to impose for Medgar Evers
16 Prep by attending several town hall meetings at the
17 campus. Mayor De Blasio and Chancellor Farina, please
18 show up to Medgar Evers Preparatory campus... Medgar,
19 Medgar... MECPS campus, our students, parents and
20 administrators deserve the respect and attention.
21 Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you very
23 much. I really appreciate and as I said the principal
24 was here a few weeks ago and I have a feeling that
25 you're going to have a strong fight ahead because

1
2 you're showing up at many events and making people
3 aware of the situation that you are describing in the
4 school so, keep coming and thank you very much for
5 your information and... [cross-talk]

6 LISA MILLSAPS: Thank you... [cross-talk]

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...we appreciate your,
8 your presence here today.

9 LISA MILLSAPS: Thank you...

10 CHARISSE SMITH: Thank you for your time.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you,
12 thank you. And with that we're going to close out...
13 we're going to adjourn this hearing at 6:20 p.m.

14 [gavel]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date

December 23, 2017