

**Testimony before the
New York City Council Committee on Higher Education
by
Denise B. Maybank, Ph.D.
Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs
The City University of New York**

September 16, 2024

Introduction

Chairperson Eric Dinowitz and members of the Committee on Higher Education, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony as you consider the engagement of CUNY students in voting and civic activities.

My name is Denise Maybank, and I have the privilege of serving as the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs for the City University of New York. I have come before you on prior occasions to share information regarding various services and supportive resources for the amazing students who choose CUNY as the university with which to partner to leverage their success. Today, I come to share the expanse of work across the university associated with your current area of focus. I am joined by colleagues from our campuses and central office units who will give you a glimpse into the associated spaces and activities and assist me in responding to any questions you may have.

The panel includes CUNY contributors to voter awareness, voter education and activism in many ways. The panel seated before you today represents the diversity of those contributions. These individuals will be introduced throughout this testimony. I also want to introduce the resource panel joining us:

Staci Emauel, Deputy Director, CUNY Office of City Relations

Steve Kleinberg, University Coordinator of CUNY Votes, and Disability Services Specialist

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

Raymond Perez, Interim Director of CUNY Disability Programs

The Context

As the largest urban university in the nation, The City University of New York is described as a “transformative engine of social mobility that is a critical component of the lifeblood of New York City.” (www.cuny.edu/about) In a 2023 interview, Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez discussed the idea of “civic mobility,” referring to the importance of developing pathways for students to engage more intentionally with the world during their academic journeys. Given the CUNY commitment to the career success of its graduates, civic mobility is linked to social and economic mobility for students, their families, and communities. CUNY plays a vital role in New York City. CUNY is New York City – our students are everywhere, helping to make the city vibrant and creating equity. Their participation as positive contributing and informed members of the democratic process is essential.

Data about CUNY Student Voters

Through an arrangement with the NYC Board of Elections we are able to receive student voter registration forms labeled as “Code D”. The NYC Board of Elections reports submissions by borough in their annual report. The Office of Applied Research, Evaluation, and Data Analytics (OAREDA) provides an annual report of student voter registration and turnout by matching NYS voter data files with university enrollment files. The report tracks, by college, NYC resident registration rates, turnout of registered voters and presents the number of first-time registrants for presidential, midterm and municipal elections.

These data have provided insights into the voting behavior of CUNY students. With data segmented by senior and community colleges we observe voter registration and election turnout to be higher among senior college students and highest among those students enrolled in graduate and professional programs.

Registration rates are variable across elections with a low of 43.8% (2022 midterm) and a high of 71.8% (2020 presidential election). Election turnout rates are highest for presidential elections (highest reported - 72.3% for the 2020 election) and lowest on average for municipal elections, although the lowest reported rate (17.3%) was for the 2014 midterm election.

Student Voice and Action

Offering voter registration strategies that resonate with the student population necessitates the involvement of current students.

Trustee and University Student Senate (USS) chairperson Salimatou Doumbouya will be testifying before you today and you will learn more of the USS commitment to the work they do and the events they offer to keep the student body engaged as informed voters.

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

Communication Tools

Effective communication to promote awareness and action remains a part of the engagement strategy. The following list presents some of the tools being used to support voter registration:

- CUNY Votes social media handles exist on multiple platforms.
- Our communications and marketing office provides social media graphics and other toolkit materials to their campus counterparts and voter registration coordinators each election cycle.
- Past voter awareness projects through Communications and Marketing include:
 - Creation of posters, brochures, digital web, and TV banners for campuses
 - PSA videos with students
 - Chancellor’s newswire

Campus Structures to Promote the Vote

The CUNY campuses have designated voter registration coordinators who facilitate year-round voter registration, while also planning a host of events, programs, seminars, and courses to educate and keep the campus community aware of what may be happening in national and local election cycles.

Given what we know of student voting behavior, we want to highlight the deliberate and successful efforts being conducted on our community college campuses. We have invited **Helen Margaret Nasser, the voter registration coordinator for Kingsborough Community College** to share the work being done.

CUNY Leading Voter Activity

There are many campus-based activities and programs tied to national voter registration initiatives. Of special note are the events promoted last week during **National Disability Voting Rights Week (September 9-13)**. The campus disability services offices offered on-site voter registration throughout the week, and two special events were held:

September 10 – The CUNY Coalition for Students with Disabilities (CCSD), in partnership with CUNY Votes, NYPIRG, the University Student Senate (USS), and others, sponsored a US Presidential debate watch party with pre-debate analysis by Dr. James Vacca.

September 12 – The CUNY Graduate Center hosted a gathering in recognition of the week featuring State Assembly Member Rebecca A. Seawright.

As you are likely aware tomorrow, September 17, is **National Voter Registration Day and US Constitution Day** so there must be something going on somewhere across CUNY. Here are a few examples:

CUNY VOTES is participating as a National Voting Rights Day coalition member.

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

LaGuardia Community College – Get the Scoop on Voter Registration (free ice cream, info about the voting process and voter registration)

John Jay College – Our Vote is Our Voice Celebration

We encourage you to look through the robust list of programming happening across CUNY and to consider participating in or attending a few of the events in the coming months.

CUNY Lifting Voting in New York

Beyond expanding the knowledge and awareness of CUNY students, CUNY upholds the tenets of its strategic roadmap by contributing to the voter engagement of the city. In partnership with the League of Women Voters, CUNY Mapping Service, a unit of the Center of Urban Research at the Graduate Center imagineered the website *Who Represents Me? NYC*. I introduce **Steven Romalewski, Director of the CUNY Mapping Service**, and lead imagineer, to share this phenomenal project with you.

Conclusion

“Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. The real safeguard of democracy, therefore, is education.” **Franklin D. Roosevelt**

We are committed to keeping before the CUNY community the value of the vote. Our right to vote is precious, holds power, and fuels promise! Someone sacrificed for it, someone marched for it, someone fought for it, someone died for it. CUNY won't sit passively by and let it be wasted or denied – CUNY will promote the VOTE!

Oversight: Engaging CUNY Students in Voting and Civic Activities.

Campus Specific Voter Activities and Programs (partial list)

Borough of Manhattan Community College

Past Events

We held the Help America Vote Day Kick-off on January 30, 2024. An Electoral Poll Worker Training session took place on May 15, 2024. We participated in National Poll Worker Recruitment Day on August 1, 2024.

Ongoing Events

We are continuously accepting Voter Registration Applications. We are also facilitating Poll Worker Sign-ups. Our team is conducting Classroom Visits to discuss poll worker opportunities and assist with completing voter registration forms. We are conducting BMCC Voting Ambassadors Interviews, Orientations, and Trainings. A Civic Engagement/Voting Poster Display is currently on exhibit.

Upcoming Events

We will celebrate Constitution Day and National Voter Registration Day on September 17, 2024. National Voter Education Week is scheduled for October 7-11, 2024. Vote Early Day will be observed on October 24, 2024. We will recognize Election Hero Day on November 6, 2024. Finally, we will host the Help America Vote Day End-of-Semester Event on December 10, 2024.

Grants Received

BMCC has been awarded the Help America Vote Mini Grant for \$9,000, the National Voter Registration Day Community College Grant of \$2,413, Vote Early Day Funding of \$1,000, and \$5,000 from Ask Every Student.

Brooklyn College

- Email Brooklyn college student links to the voter registration form and absentee ballots
- Supply each office under the Division of Student Affairs with Voter Registration D forms
- The Center for Disability Services will offer assistance to students with disabilities in completing voter registration forms online.
- Constitution Day – tabling event and social media engagement
- National Voter Registration Day – tabling event and social media engagement
- Early Voting – email students about voting, polling site as well as social media engagement

College of Staten Island

Ongoing Initiatives:

- Office of Student Life states in all publications, social media platforms and on the CSI website that Voter Registration/Poll Worker is an initiative of our office.

Fall, 2024 Initiatives:

- E-Mailing a Voter Registration letter to all registered CSI Students, with a link to the CUNY website w/ Voter Registration form and absentee ballot.
- Work with the Center for Student Accessibility office to implement the NYS Election Law Section 5-211 and the NVRA, 42 U.S.C. 1973gg-5(3)(A) and (B)(1) virtually, regarding the requirement to offer assistance to students with disabilities in completing voter registration forms, and how to transmit forms to the City Board of Elections.
- Send information to "The Banner" student newspaper on Voter Registration and the CUNY Voter Registration web page.
- Work closely with NYPIRG to coordinate events for Voter Awareness Month (National Voter Registration Day, 9/17/2023), which will be held in the fall 2024 semester.
- Work closely with NYPIRG and have them partner with NYC Votes "We Power NYC" campaign to set-up tabling and voter registration rallies.
- Work closely with NYPIRG, Student Government and Political Science Faculty to sponsor CLUE certified workshops on the importance of elections and registering to vote.
- Designate and design specific post on social media platforms centered on voter registration and the importance of voting on election days.

John Jay College

John Jay will be hosting several events for voter registration. One that we find particularly engaging for students is the **Center for Student Involvement and Leadership (CSIL) Constitution Day Celebration on September 17th in the Atrium from 1:40pm to 3:00pm**. We will have stations for students to receive t-shirts once they register to vote with a message Our Vote is Our Voice, we will have mascot costumes of the founding fathers for photo opportunities, a social media campaign asking students why they are voting, tables with the polling sites along with information on the upcoming elections and who is running for office.

Guttman Community College

Guttman is hosting a key event on **National Voter Registration Day (Sept. 17)** to highlight the importance and impact of voting as well as give students an opportunity to register to vote.

The event will begin with a townhall, followed by a panel discussion, and conclude with an opportunity for students to register to vote. The panel will include elected officials and members of the NAACP and will focus on the importance of voting, its impact, as well as information about how to register, how to find your polling site, and what to bring and expect when you go to vote.

Hunter College

Voter Registration Fair- September 17th, 10am-6pm, Student Union

This event is co-sponsored by our Undergraduate Student Government and the Office of Student Activities.

Activities happening throughout the day:

- NYPIRG getting students registered to vote
- USG officers and the political science club will be tabling to help students identify their polling location.
- A table where students can see a sample ballot to understand what their ballot might look like.
- The office of external affairs will be sharing info on how to become a poll worker and how to get involved/employed during this election period.
- Students will be able to decorate cards to mail out to swing state voters with Get Out the Vote Information.
- Snacks, giveaways, stickers, etc.

We're also hoping to have a Hunter student who works with an organization called "Drag Out the Vote" perform.

Other Notable Hunter College Election Events:

What's at Stake in November? A Hunter College Forum on the 2024 Presidential Election	Co-presented by the Political Science Department. Speakers: Nancy Foner, Cynthia Roberts, Charles Tien Moderated by: Lina Newton, Interim Public Policy Program Director
Roosevelt House - Election 2024 Pollsters event	Speakers - TBD, event being organized by Roosevelt House and Dr. Lina Newton
Election 2024 and Latin X Communities	Event held in our new Latin X Student Affinity Space where faculty will discuss the important issues on the ballot this year that could affect the Latin X Communities.
Election 2024 and Black Communities	Event held in our new Black Student Affinity Space where faculty will discuss the important issues on the ballot this year that could affect Black Communities.
Election 2024 and Asian Communities	Event held in our new Asian Student Affinity Space where faculty will discuss the important issues on the ballot this year that could affect the Asian Communities.

Election 2024 and LGBTQ Communities	Event held in our new LGBT Student Affinity Space where faculty will discuss the important issues on the ballot this year that could affect the LGBT Communities.
Election 2024 and Immigration	Event held in our new Immigrant Student Success Center where faculty will discuss the important issues on the ballot this year that could affect the Immigrant Communities.
Election Interference in 2024- Sources You Can Trust	Event to teach students about the types of sources that are best and available to them to get information about election topics led by the Library Team.

LaGuardia Community College

The following events are being planned by Student Affairs at LaGuardia:

9/17: **Get the Scoop on Voter Registration** (free ice cream; info about the voting process/voter reg drive/Constitution Day)

10/9: **Unbought and Unbossed: Women in Politics** (feat. CM Julie Won, CM Tiffany Caban and Chanel Lopez, Deputy Director of LGBTQ+ Affairs for Governor Kathy Hochul; a discussion about how these women have navigated the political landscape with a focus on how they have overcome attempts to marginalize them; and how they have used that to empower other women to pursue leadership opportunities).

Lehman College

We are participating in National Voter Registration Day (flyer attached). In addition, for the week of Oct 7 – Oct 10 from 10am-2pm, we are hosting a Voter Awareness Campaign along with the Divine Nine Bronx alumni/alumnae chapters.

Macaulay Honors College

Here are the voter engagement activities / Constitution Day activities occurring at Macaulay Honors College:

09/06/2024: League of Women Voters hosted voter registration tables in the lobby of the building

09/17/2024: Constitution Day KAHOOT!

10/19/2024: Macaulay Scholars Council (SGA) will be hosting a voter registration table in the building

In addition, Macaulay Honors College is teaching two fall 2024 courses supporting this topic:

- MHC 331 Decision 2024: The Election In Real Time
- MHC 347 Ecosystems of Democracy.

Medgar Evers College

Voter Registration – Included as part of Welcome Week Activities:

- 8/28: Welcome Back Breakfast (Student Life)
- 9/3: Taco Tuesday (Student Life)
- 9/4: College Spirit Day (Student Life)
- 9/10: Debate Watch Party and Voter Registration Drive (Alumni Relations)
- 9/11: Club Fair (Student Life and NAACP – MEC Chapter)
- 9/17: Constitution Day

Voter Awareness:

- 9/25: What to Know About Project 2025 (NAACP – MEC Chapter)

On Thursday, **September 19, 2024, from 2pm-4pm, “Are You Listening!”** being held in the EOJ Auditorium located at 1637 Bedford Avenue (corner of Crown Street), Medgar Evers College.

The forum creates a space to listen and have an interactive conversation with our male students about their views around the election, Project 2025, and how they believe they can impact the vote.

The moderator for the conversation will be Kevin Powell, who is an award-winning author of 16 books, Grammy-nominated, Tupac Shakur Biographer, journalist, and filmmaker

Special Invited Guests: Brooklyn Borough President, Antonio Reynoso, NYC Public Advocate, Jumaane Williams, Former US Congressman, Ed Towns, Councilmember Yusef Salaam, Councilmember Brian Cunningham, NYS Senator Zelnor Myrie.

The forum will not be promoting any candidates or encouraging allegiance to any parties. We want to hear what the students have to say.

Voter Registration will take place as part of the program.

Also, on Wednesday, October 9, 2024, we will be having the same conversation with our female students (details being finalized).



JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS

**TESTIMONY OF PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS
TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION**

Good morning,

My name is Jumaane D. Williams, and I am the Public Advocate for the City of New York. I thank Chair Dinowitz and the members of the Committee on Higher Education for holding this hearing today.

Since the early days of our republic, colleges and universities have been a cornerstone of our democracy, educating our youth and playing a key role in numerous movements across our nation's history. When it comes to civic engagement and voter participation, we've seen the way urban centers and localities in proximity to colleges and universities are influenced by the swells of student voters with 2 in 3 college counties growing more Democratic since 2000.¹ In 2020, researchers at Tuft University found that college students have a voting rate of 66% nationally.²

From 2016 to 2020 alone, the voting rate increased 14% with students mobilizing around issues such as climate change and gun control. Building on this momentum however is especially critical with ballot access being challenged in states across the country and efforts to suppress the student vote.

This makes initiatives like CUNY Votes all the more important. A comprehensive non-partisan initiative, CUNY Votes promotes student voter registration, increases voter participation and voter awareness through campus based activities, external partnerships and University-wide campaigns. CUNY has conveniently placed information on their webpage promoting "CUNY Votes" that informs the CUNY community on how to register to vote, become a poll worker, and become a CUNY Registration Coordinator. Moreover, the page has information on who can register to vote and on the various political parties that exist in New York State.

¹ Mahtesian, Charles; Alexander, Madi. "This Is a Really Big Deal': How College Towns Are Decimating the GOP". *Politico*.

https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2023/07/21/gop-college-towns-00106974?template_id=OTJIR2CRKUD6&variant_id=OTVPXN5JGTYRX&is_login_link=true

² Paredes, Ingrid. "Student Voter Turnout: Key Data on Recent Trends and Opportunities". *Union of Concerned Scientists*.

<https://blog.ucsusa.org/ingrid-paredes/student-voter-turnout-key-data-on-recent-trends-and-opportunities/>



JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS

As we speak here today about civic engagement, it is also important to recognize that we are more polarized in our politics today than ever before. In enabling our youth to vote, in preparing our future leaders, we face the difficult task of not only grappling with the complexity of issues ourselves but also fostering a society where we are learning from one another across the lines of race, age, gender, sexuality, religion, etc.

Making sure our youth feel heard, fostering the right to organize and protest, participating in democratic debate are some of the most effective means of increasing civic engagement. We need to do better by our students and doing better also means fully funding CUNY so that our students aren't attending classes in crumbling buildings with rodents, mold and leaks. Thank you.



Center for Urban Research

365 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10016-4309
212.817.2030
212.817.1575 fax
www.gc.cuny.edu

**Testimony of Steven Romalewski, Director, CUNY Mapping Service
Center for Urban Research at the Graduate Center, CUNY
to the New York City Council Committee on Higher Education
Hon. Eric Dinowitz, Chair
Monday, September 16, 2024**

Good morning Chair Dinowitz and members of the New York City Council Committee on Higher Education. Thank you for your interest in efforts to engage City University of New York (CUNY) students in voting and civic activities. My name is Steven Romalewski and I direct the Mapping Service within the Center for Urban Research at CUNY's Graduate Center.

The Center for Urban Research (CUR), led by distinguished professor John Mollenkopf, organizes basic and applied research addressing core issues facing New York and other large cities, often in partnership with foundations, public agencies, nonprofits, and other clients. It also trains students in research techniques and presents public forums on urban policy issues.

My staff and I leverage spatial information and analysis techniques on behalf of CUNY researchers and students and other partner organizations in government and with nonprofits, foundations, and businesses to develop and execute applied research projects. Recent initiatives include creating a national, interactive, online mapping system to track participation in the 2020 decennial U.S. Census (with a similar effort planned for the upcoming 2030 Census), online maps helping people to understand the redistricting process across several U.S. states and especially in New York State and New York City, and interactive mapping projects in partnership with the New York City Campaign Finance Board, the New York Academy of Medicine, the Long Island Index, and others.

One of our projects provides a unique opportunity for CUNY students and all New Yorkers to engage with their elected representatives in New York City: the *Who Represents Me? NYC* project that we have jointly managed with the League of Women Voters of the City of New York (LWVNYC) for more than 10 years.

Who Represents Me

Who Represents Me? NYC is a free website, accessible on any computer or device at www.mygovernment.nyc and www.mygovnyc.org, that provides up-to-date information about elected officials at all levels of government for every location in New York City. The site displays interactive maps of legislative districts and NYC Community Boards. You can search by address



to display a list of all of your elected representatives, and you can click on interactive maps to show that information for any location.

Importantly, the site provides up-to-date contact information and links such as email addresses, individual websites, and social media pages of elected officials. *Who Represents Me* is the only comprehensive online source for all elected officials in New York City designed specifically for New Yorkers. It is used extensively by public officials, advocates, service organizations, journalists, and members of the public.

Post-2020 Redistricting Updates

The Center for Urban Research first launched *Who Represents Me* in partnership with the League of Women Voters and with funding support from the New York Community Trust after post-2010 redistricting had changed the contours of elected representation across the five boroughs.

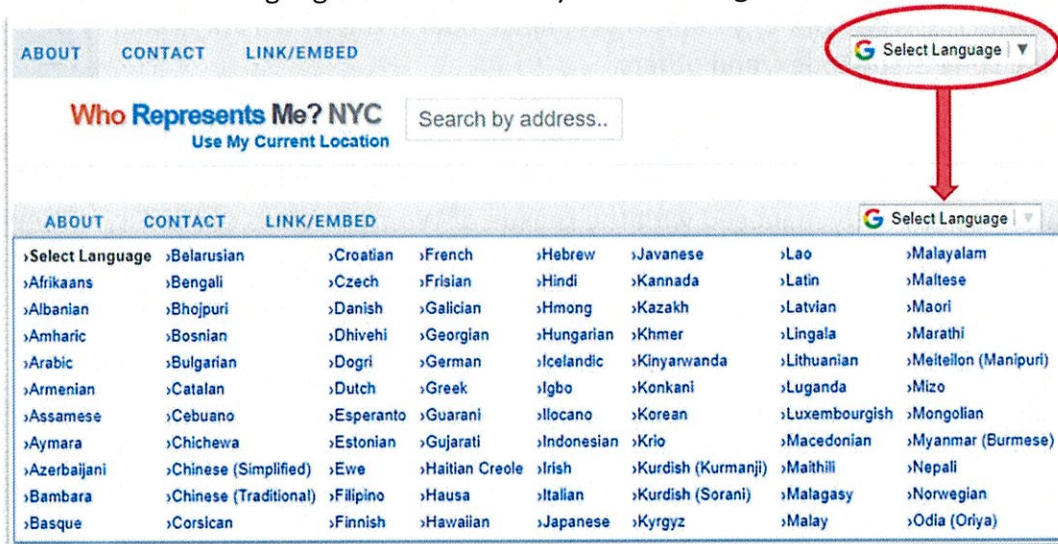
In the last year and a half following the redistricting cycle after the 2020 Census, we updated and enhanced *Who Represents Me* in several ways of benefit to all New Yorkers (also with generous support from the New York Community Trust).

1. Updating elected official contact information

In January 2023, redistricted congressional and state legislative districts took effect and many new representatives across New York City took office. Later in 2023, City Council districts were also redrawn and new councilmembers took office in early 2024. The League of Women Voters surveyed all these new representatives in early 2023 and 2024 to collect updated contact information, which CUR incorporated into the *Who Represents Me* website. Between CUR and the League of Women Voters we are continuing to keep this information up-to-date.

2. Website language translation

We integrated Google's free translation feature into the *Who Represents Me* website to provide translation in dozens of languages as illustrated by the following screenshot.



3. Technology updates to modernize the site

We launched the updated version of *Who Represents Me* in summer 2023 with a redesigned information display and improved performance through more efficient backend systems.


The default view when you visit the site is now simpler and more focused on the address search feature; see screenshot below. It also displays the language translation option and provides a “Use My Current Location” option ideal for people accessing the site via smartphones or tablets in the field – especially helpful on CUNY and other campuses across the city.



Before we redesigned *Who Represents Me*, the site displayed information about only one district office for each elected official. Now the site shows information about each representative’s district office and main office either at City Hall, the state capital in Albany, or Washington, DC. *Who Represents Me* also displays up to two local offices with a link to each official’s website if they have more than two.

The new design features a link to CUR’s *Redistricting & You* website to show how each legislative and congressional district changed with recent redistricting. It includes an interactive map of the new district (if you click the map a new window opens that displays all overlapping districts for your location), and displays new social media handles for each representative along with all the prior information that *Who Represents Me* included (photo, office address, phone, email, and fax if available) – [see following example](#).

ABOUT CONTACT LINK/EMBED Select Language

 YOUR LOCATION
 365 FIFTH AVENUE, New York, NY, USA

A service of the Center for Urban Research at the City University of New York (CUNY) [Graduate Center](#) in partnership with the [League of Women Voters of the City of New York](#)


For the latest information on voting and elections, visit the League of Women Voters of the City of New York's [voting and election resources page](#)

CITY STATE FEDERAL

CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT 4

NYC Council districts were redrawn in 2023. Visit [Redistricting & You](#) to compare with 2013-2023 districts.


Keith Powers (D)



Email: K Powers@council.nyc.gov
 Website: <https://council.nyc.gov/district-4/>
 X: [KeithPowersNYC](#)
 Facebook: [KeithPowersNYC](#)
 Instagram: [keithpowersnyc](#)

District office(s)
 211 E 43rd St
 Suite 1205
 New York, NY 10017
 Phone: 212-818-0580
 Fax: N/A

City Hall office
 250 Broadway
 Suite 1789
 New York, NY 10007
 Phone: 212-788-7393
 Fax: N/A



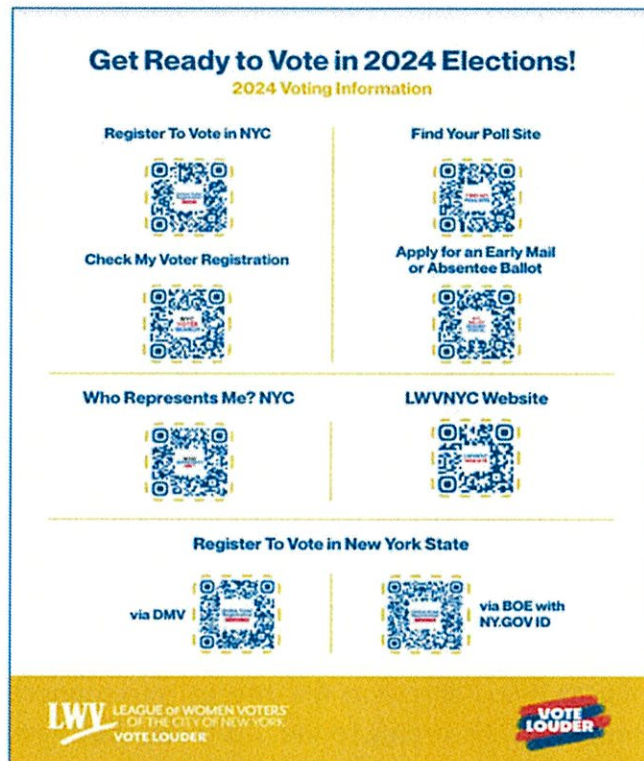
CUR also developed a set of automated web services that regularly check the websites for each level of government in New York City (including Community Boards) to identify any changes in representatives or district office contact information. This helps ensure that we identify changes in real time from legislative websites so we do not need to wait for an elected official to inform us that a phone number or email address has been updated, for example. Our web services alert CUR and LWVNYC via email so we both can evaluate if the changes need to be added to the *Who Represents Me* database. This approach supplements efforts by LWVNYC to periodically survey local representatives for new contact information.

4. Outreach to help people make the best use of *Who Represents Me*

Both CUNY and the League of Women Voters have been active in keeping people aware of the updated and improved *Who Represents Me* service, through updates on our websites, print resources, and trainings.

For example, the CUNY Votes website at www.cuny.edu/register-to-vote/ includes a prominent feature about *Who Represents Me* so CUNY students, professors, and staff can easily connect with their elected representatives.

Whenever LWVNYC volunteers are in the community, tabling on college campuses, New York Liberty basketball games, Street Fairs or Senior Centers, their clipboards and table signs include a QR code to quickly and efficiently provide New Yorkers with the contact information for their elected or appointed representatives; example below.



As a key tool for understanding NYC government, *Who Represents Me* is referenced several times in the LWVNYC's primer on how NYC operates, titled *What Makes New York City Run?*

Examples of success

The *Who Represents Me* service is used extensively by New Yorkers on a regular basis.

From January 2024 through May 2024 (when our grant report was submitted to the NY Community Trust), *Who Represents Me* was visited almost 75,000 times by almost 29,000 people (an average of 15,000 visits by 5,800 people per month over that five-month period).

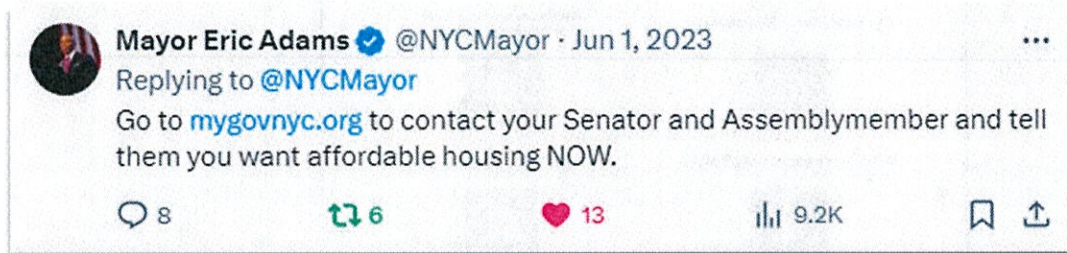
The *Who Represents Me* site is regularly featured on social media when organizations are urging colleagues and the public to contact their elected officials. This has included organizations involved with campaigns to prevent cuts to the [New York City Parks budget](#), groups promoting [trans rights](#), and more recently transit and environmental advocates concerned about Governor Kathy Hochul's "pause" of [congestion pricing](#).

The LWVNYC Speakers Bureau provides formal presentations and training on Civics and Advocacy to middle school, high school and college groups, corporations, and community and religious organizations throughout the city. As part of these presentations, League volunteers

challenge students to use *Who Represents Me* to reach out to their city council person during the class. Diane Burrows, Chair of LWVNYC Speakers Bureau, notes that:

They put their phone on “speaker” and, after discussing the issues that are important to them in their community, they make the call and the rest of us listen. It is so powerful for the students to realize that they can use their voice with a touch of their phone!

Elected officials themselves urge people to visit *Who Represents Me* to contact representatives about policy issues. In June 2023, for example, New York City Mayor Eric Adams and his office included *Who Represents Me* in several posts on Twitter/X about the need to contact state legislators about housing reforms:



- <https://x.com/NYCMayor/status/1664357231276482560>
- <https://x.com/NYCMayorsOffice/status/1664379525889683456>
- <https://x.com/nycgov/status/1664390111901908995>

New York City’s 311 system uses *Who Represents Me* internally to connect callers with their appropriate elected representatives. According to the 311 team, they have not been able to compile detailed contact information in one place for all representatives; the 311 system only provides links to legislative websites, resulting in multiple clicks and calls to obtain the information that *Who Represents Me* already provides in one place. Therefore, they requested to use our service internally as a resource site for their representatives to use for customers that call and request additional contact information. They are considering whether to also incorporate *Who Represents Me* into 311’s public-facing web services.

In early 2024 TheCity.nyc published an online guide titled “[Who To Yell At: A New Yorker’s Guide on Who to Call to Get Local Problems Fixed](#)”. The guide included an entire section featuring the *Who Represents Me* service, including a link to the website.

Recently the Partnership for New York City launched a Civic Engagement Campaign website at www.nyfuture.org for New Yorkers, and they have embedded the *Who Represents Me? NYC* service in their new site. You can access it directly at <https://www.nyfuture.org/find-my-rep>.

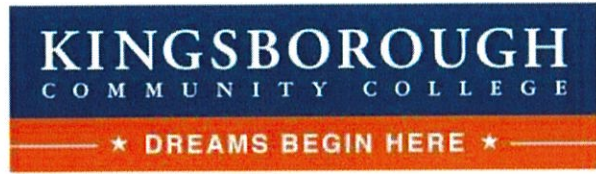
CUR’s Overall Civic Engagement Support

Who Represents Me is just one example of the Center for Urban Research’s work to help New Yorkers engage in civic life. We have developed a large body of work providing information/visualization/data analysis for every step along the civic path. This includes:

- The **Census Hard to Count map** ([2020 version](#)) helping stakeholder groups nationwide to ensure that everyone is counted in a fair and accurate census;
- **Redistricting & You** mapping websites in [New York City](#), [New York State](#), and [nine other states](#) to help people and organizations understand the impact of drawing district lines based on the census enumeration;
- **analyzing and visualizing the population patterns within those districts** via *Redistricting & You* and other projects such as the [2023 CUNY report for the NYC Districting Commission](#) about communities of interest;
- **visualizing local contribution patterns for municipal election campaigns** via interactive maps for the NYC Campaign Finance Board (first launched for the 2013 municipal election cycle and [updated for each major election since then](#) – the 2025 version will be online soon);
- understanding **voter registration patterns** across the city; and
- **analyzing and visualizing election results** for individual districts and citywide offices via our [NYC Election Atlas](#) and other projects such as our [interactive map of 2021 ranked choice vote results](#) for mayor and comptroller.

I hope this information is helpful to the City Council. I would be glad to answer any questions you have about our work and how we can be of further assistance.

Thank you.



Student Union and Intercultural Center

Testimony of Helen-Margaret Nasser
Director, Student Union and Intercultural Center at Kingsborough Community
College
before the New York City Council Committee on Higher Education
September 16, 2024

Good morning Chair Dinowitz, members of the New York City Council Committee on Higher Education, my name is Helen-Margaret Nasser and I serve as the Director of the Student Union and Intercultural Center (SU&IC) at Kingsborough Community College. I also serve as the College's student voter registration coordinator.

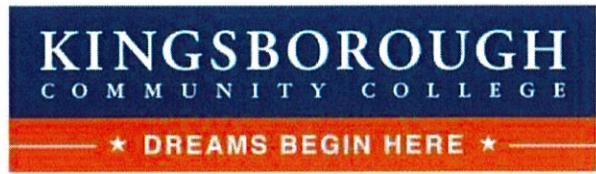
Thank you for your interest in voter engagement and education at KCC. I would like to thank Vice Chancellor Maybank for the invitation to join the CUNY Votes panel this morning.

As the only community college in one of the nation's most diverse counties - I could not imagine a more apt place to be actively working on civic engagement, voter education, and student empowerment. This work is also embedded in the college's longstanding commitment to civic engagement and the mission of the SU&IC.

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

Thanks to data from the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) we have been able to see how our efforts at KCC have changed over time and compare it to the national average. NSLVE offers colleges and universities an opportunity to learn their student registration and voting rates and, for interested campuses, a closer examination of their campus climate for political learning and engagement and correlations between specific student learning experiences and voting.¹ Our NSLVE data has shown a steady increase in the student voting rate since we have begun to promote voter registration and civic holidays as part of the mission of the Center and in

¹ <https://idhe.tufts.edu/nslve>



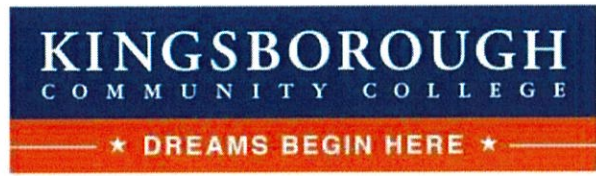
Student Union and Intercultural Center

alignment with the college's commitment to civic engagement. 2014 NSLVE data showed a KCC voting rate of 6.7%. The 2020 NSLVE report showed that number increased to 34.7%.

However, many of our students feel disconnected, unseen, and disinterested in political life. Voter registration drives are often met with shrugs and skepticism. Students are concerned about social problems but do not see the potential for an impact or meaningful change. But they are paying attention and they do care. Students are able to engage in conversation about the issues that impact them on a daily basis, ask hard questions, and model dialogue across differences. There is much power in the lived experiences of our students - whether they are born and raised in Brooklyn, first-generation immigrants, DACA or undocumented, or international students, they all have something to contribute to the conversation about political education and our classrooms and campuses are enriched by this diversity and nuance. We help our students make the connection between what they observe and experience and involvement in political processes and structures.

We are very collaborative in our efforts for greater voter education and engagement. We participate yearly in National Voter Registration Day each September and ask students to contemplate the US Constitution on Constitution Day by asking them to consider the questions: "Who are We the People?" and "What would make a More Perfect Union?" We have worked closely with our Office of Government Relations to bring elected officials to campus to have our students understand their pathway into politics and how that path could come from just being a concerned citizen eager to make a difference and not uniquely a law degree. We work with community-based organizations, advocacy groups and national organizations to help bolster our efforts with resources and grant funds. Our communication efforts extend to students, faculty and staff via email, flyers and social media.

We are also aware that not everyone at KCC is eligible to vote - with a high number of international students and DACA and undocumented students we also have to be very explicit in who and how we engage in voter registration. Not everyone can register to vote or vote, but they can become informed on the issues that impact their lives and become effective advocates to their friends and families who can vote. There is also a richness that is held from our students who have experiences living in countries with



Student Union and Intercultural Center

autocratic or totalitarian regimes. By sharing their experiences they can help develop a greater appreciation for the political rights that exist in the United States.

For the last two academic years our voter drives have been supported by work study students - Engage the Elections student workers. They will be trained using Ask Every Student resources and develop brief presentations to be made in classes in addition to weekly registration campaigns and social media content creation. In addition to these efforts, election information, polling site locators, sample ballots, and information regarding early voting is provided to students via email in the weeks leading up to elections. Having students speak directly to students has been an effective strategy.

We offer a holistic approach beyond voting - political engagement is constant, involves everyone and impacts everyone. Why would you want to sit this out? We show the power of advocacy movements within the United States and beyond throughout history to show that change takes time, courage, consistency, and collaboration. Documentary film screenings, podcasts, rap lyrics, giveaways and free food are all ways to open dialogue. We empower students to understand that their skills and talents are valuable assets to changemaking. We also had successful engagement and participation in the NYC Civic Engagement Commissions participatory budgeting program - The People's Money - with students participating in idea generation sessions and voting for borough-specific projects. This project helped elevate students' concerns and illustrated political participation beyond voting and with direct impact on their communities.

I am passionate about this work and my efforts at KCC are the same regardless of whether it is a presidential election year or not - every election matters from local to national and every election has an impact on our students and their futures. I am grateful for efforts from NYC Votes, The NYC Civic Engagement Commission, the CUNY Votes group, The National Students Learn Students Vote coalition, All In to Vote, Campus Vote Project, Pizza to the Polls, GenVotes. If we are committed to a brighter future for our city, nation and world this is the type of synergy that is required - consistent, collaborative, creative, and compassionate. I am grateful for faculty partners and administrators who support me in this work.

Greetings Honorable Council Members,

My name is Samantha Ventura, and I am an Early Childhood Education major at Bronx Community College, expecting to graduate in 2025. As a student leader and advocate, my goal is to foster a more engaged and proactive student body. Student leadership, staying informed, and advocacy are essential to building this vibrant community. Through leadership, we take responsibility for addressing the challenges our peers face; staying informed allows us to navigate these issues with clarity and purpose; and advocacy ensures that our voices are represented in decisions that shape our education and future.

Equally important is student participation in civic activities, particularly voter registration and engagement. Voting provides us with the power to influence policies that impact not only our education but also our broader communities. Our parents, many of whom immigrated to this country leaving behind their entire lives, did so with the hope of providing us with a better future. Their sacrifices underscore the importance of us taking an active role in shaping the society we live in. By encouraging voter registration and civic involvement, we honor their journey and ensure that our voices are heard.

To enhance student engagement in voting and civic activities, I would like to see increased voter education programs, more accessible voting information, and dedicated campus resources for civic involvement. Additionally, CUNY and New York City need to improve access to voter registration resources on campus and support student-led civic initiatives to empower students fully. By fostering leadership, advocacy, and civic participation, we create a stronger, more inclusive community that is better equipped to meet the needs of all students.

Sincerely,

Samantha Ventura

Bronx Community College Student Senator

New York Public Interest Research Group Board Member

University Student Senate Alternate

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: 9/16/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Helen-Margaret Nassar
Address: [Redacted] Kings Park NY 11754
I represent: CUNY - Kingsborough
Address: 200 Oriental Blvd Brooklyn NY 11235

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

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 in favor in opposition

Date: Sept 16, 2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Denise Maybank
Address: [Redacted] Street
I represent: CUNY
Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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 in favor in opposition

Date: 9-16-24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Steven Romalewski
Address: [Redacted] NY, NY 10009
I represent: CUNY Graduate Center
Address: 365 5th Ave NY, NY 10016

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: 9/16/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: AMINA MALIK

Address: [REDACTED] NY, 10017

I represent: CUNY

Address: _____

Public

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. CUNY Voting Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 9/16/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Megan Ahearn

Address: [REDACTED] NY, NY

I represent: NYPIRG

Address: 9 Murray St NY, NY

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: 9/16/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tahisha Fields

Address: [REDACTED] NY NY

I represent: USS Delgate

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Alexis Ramirez

Address: [Redacted] Martie Ave

I represent: USS

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Alkeem Palack

Address: _____

I represent: University Student Senator

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Salimatu Yamberwa

Address: [Redacted]

I represent: UNY Students

Address: _____

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**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Junior E. Andrews

Address: _____

I represent: Madison Ave College / USS

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 07/16/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: John Jake Morales

Address: _____ NY 11014

I represent: CUNY University Student Senate

Address: 55 W 57th St, New York NY 10019

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 9/16/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sharon Brown

Address: 130-10 140 Street Suite 1

I represent: Rose of Sharon Enterprises

Address: 43 Madison Street Bklyn

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms