

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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August 21, 2012
Start: 11:14 a.m.
Recess: 12:01 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers
City Hall

B E F O R E:
ROBERT JACKSON
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Charles Barron
Lewis A. Fidler
Helen D. Foster
Daniel R. Garodnick
G. Oliver Koppell
Jessica S. Lappin
James Vacca
Albert Vann
Fernando Cabrera
Margaret S. Chin
Daniel Dromm
Karen Koslowitz
Stephen T. Levin

A P P E A R A N C E S

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Deborah L. Rose
Mark S. Weprin
Vincent M. Ignizio
Eric A. Ulrich
David G. Greenfield

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2 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Good morning
3 and welcome to today's Education Committee Hearing
4 to vote on proposed resolution number 910-A and
5 proposed resolution number 911-A. Before I read
6 my opening statement, let me introduce our
7 colleagues that are present this morning. From my
8 left to my right, Council Member Al Vann of
9 Brooklyn, Council Member Mark Weprin of Queens,
10 Council Member David Greenfield of Brooklyn,
11 Council Member Charles Barron of Brooklyn, Council
12 member Vincent Ignizio of Staten Island, Council
13 Member Karen Koslowitz of Queens, Council Member
14 Margaret Chin of Manhattan, Council Member Danny
15 Dromm of Queens, and Council Member Fernando
16 Cabrera of the Bronx.

17 Proposed resolution number 910-A
18 calls on the New York State Legislature to pass
19 and the governor to sign legislation supporting
20 breakfast in the classroom in every school in New
21 York City. Proposed resolution number 911-A calls
22 on the New York City Department of Education to
23 support breakfast in the classroom in every school
24 in New York City. I just want to make a few
25 comments and then we will move on to hear a

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2 statement from our colleague, Steve Levin, the
3 lead sponsor of proposed resolution number 910-A
4 and proposed resolution number 911-A. This
5 Committee has held several hearings on the
6 Department of Education's school food programs,
7 including a hearing focused on school breakfast in
8 November of 2008. At that time in subsequent
9 hearings, we learned that school food is a major
10 part of many children's diets with many consuming
11 as much as $\frac{1}{2}$ their daily calories at the school.
12 We also learned that the number of students who
13 eat breakfast in school is far lower than the
14 number who eats school lunch. According to the
15 Department of Education as of January 2012, only
16 28.4% of elementary school students, 15.4% of
17 middle school students and 12.6% of high school
18 students participate in school breakfast programs.
19 We've all heard that breakfast is the most
20 important meal of the day. Well, this is even
21 more true for students who need to start their day
22 with nutritious breakfast to be able to focus on
23 listening and learning. With that, let me turn to
24 our colleague, Steve Levin, who is the lead
25 sponsor of both resolutions.

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2 MALE VOICE: Can I ask a question
3 before you go to Levin? No. You quoted some
4 percentages. I just want to know is that students
5 enrolled, or those who are eligible or is every
6 child eligible?

7 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: This is
8 according to DOE's January only of the total
9 number of students, that percentage 28.4—okay—eat
10 breakfast in elementary school. Every child.

11 MALE VOICE: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: 15.4% in
13 middle schools and 12.6% in high schools, so the
14 lower grades there is a higher percentage. As you
15 get older, it seems to be less and less, but that
16 is of the total population of the number of
17 students in each category.

18 MALE VOICE: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Council
20 Member Levin?

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you,
22 Chair Jackson. Thank you for the opportunity to
23 speak this morning and thanks to you and to
24 leadership of you and Speaker Quinn, the City
25 Council is taking today a firm stand for food

1 security for the 1.1 million school children in
2 New York City. Every night, thousands of children
3 in New York City go to bed hungry and every
4 morning thousands of children go to school hungry.
5 Too many children show up to school without having
6 breakfast—the most important meal of the day. In
7 New York City only 34% of children who qualify for
8 free reduced lunch eat a school breakfast, ranking
9 us 27th in the nation in terms of effectiveness out
10 of 27 cities polled this year. New York State was
11 ranked just 37th in the nation. Comparatively,
12 cities like Newark, Detroit, and Boston have been
13 able to reach between 68 and 94% of students who
14 qualify for free or reduced lunch with their
15 breakfast program. - - New York City every child
16 has access to free breakfast. By implementing a
17 breakfast in the classroom model which provides
18 every student with a free brown bag breakfast
19 during home room. These cities have eliminated
20 both the stigma and cumbersome paperwork of
21 traditional school breakfast programs and
22 drastically improved the participation rates,
23 thereby ensuring that every child has a proper and
24 nutritional start to the school day. Currently
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2 right now in New York City we offer a free
3 breakfast to every child in the cafeterias.
4 Unfortunately, the program lacks the effectiveness
5 that our children deserve. Resolutions 910 and
6 911, which urge the state legislature and the New
7 York City Department of Education to support
8 breakfast in the classroom will ensure that no New
9 York City school student goes hungry during the
10 school day. Thank you again, Chairman Jackson,
11 and thanks to Speaker Quinn and your staff for
12 your support of this important initiative. I urge
13 all of my colleagues to vote in support of both
14 resolutions. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

15 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you,
16 Council Member Levin. Any comments from my
17 colleagues? Hearing none, I'm going to ask the
18 clerk to call the roll. I recommend an aye vote
19 on both resolutions.

20 COMMITTEE CLERK: William Martin,
21 Committee Clerk. Roll call vote in the Committee
22 on Education Resolution 910-A and 911-A. Council
23 Member Jackson?

24 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: I vote aye.

25 COMMITTEE CLERK: Barron?

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COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Aye on all.

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COMMITTEE CLERK: Vann?

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COUNCIL MEMBER VANN: Aye.

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COMMITTEE CLERK: Cabrera?

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COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Aye.

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COMMITTEE CLERK: Chin?

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COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Aye.

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COMMITTEE CLERK: Dromm?

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COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Aye.

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COMMITTEE CLERK: Koslowitz?

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COUNCIL MEMBER KOSLOWITZ: Aye.

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COMMITTEE CLERK: Levin?

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COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Aye.

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COMMITTEE CLERK: Weprin?

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COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Can I have

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an opportunity to explain my vote?

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Yes, you may.

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COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Just

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briefly I think Council Member Levin has

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obviously—is addressing a very important issue

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here. Breakfast is the most important meal of the

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day and we want to encourage kids to have

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breakfast wherever possible. I think the argument

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that I heard that the city has made that somehow

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2 this will help foster obesity I think is a silly
3 argument. I do have some concerns about this. I
4 will probably support the resolution going out of
5 Committee and intent of this, but I do have some
6 concerns in my mind because I've always thought
7 cafeterias are for eating and classrooms are for
8 learning and as it is, we don't spend enough time
9 learning. We spend time taking tests in
10 classrooms. I hate to cut into any of that class
11 time as well as issues that could be developed in
12 individual classrooms when a teacher doesn't want
13 to be the one who gives out the food and cleans up
14 the food and might mess up their sanctuary of a
15 classroom, especially for younger children, so I
16 think there are issues that come out from this
17 that may not be addressed—and currently, a
18 principal can make a decision to do this if they
19 so choose, and out of all the things to mandate on
20 the DOE or to get the DOE to do this is not on the
21 top ten of my priorities of things I'd like to
22 change at the DOE, but I do understand the
23 priority of trying to get children to eat
24 breakfast and I do encourage kids to—make that as
25 easy and that's why I think it's great that they

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2 do currently serve these meals, but I'm going to
3 support the resolution, but I just wanted to
4 express some of the concerns I have about the
5 local issues and these individual issues that
6 might happen in classrooms, so with that in mind,
7 I will still vote aye out of respect for Council
8 Member Levin and his great intention.

9 COMMITTEE CLERK: Greenfield?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Can I
11 explain my vote?

12 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Yes, you may.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Thank
14 you, Mr. Chairman. You know, and I too I want to
15 thank the Speaker and Chair Jackson and Council
16 Member Levin for his leadership on this issue. I
17 just want to highlight the flipside for a second
18 'cause I think it's important. I understand some
19 concerns, but I'll never forget the first day my
20 wife became a school teacher and she went to teach
21 in Bushwick Brooklyn. She came back and she said,
22 "Honey, we have to go out. I have to buy
23 pretzels." "Pretzels" I said, "You bought school
24 supplies. You already bought plenty of stuff that
25 was out of pocket. What are we buying pretzels

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2 for?" "So let me tell you what happened," she
3 said. "There was a kid in the class and he just
4 wasn't really happy and in the middle of the day I
5 said, hey is everything okay?" And he said, "Well,
6 you know I'm a little bit hungry." So my wife
7 turned to him and said—and this is second grade,
8 and my wife turned to him and said, "Well, you
9 know, have you eaten anything?" And the kid said,
10 "Yeah, I had cereal." So my wife said, "Why are
11 you hungry if you had cereal?" And he said, "Oh, I
12 had cereal for dinner last night, but I haven't
13 had any breakfast yet." And so the reality is that
14 in 72% of the cases of our children in New York
15 City, they're not eating breakfast and in many of
16 the cases it's not the kid's own fault and in some
17 cases, it is the parents' fault and in other
18 cases, it's not the parents' fault. Right? You
19 work three jobs and you're rushing around and
20 you're trying to drop your kids off and you forget
21 and it may not be responsible or right, but these
22 things do happen. The other thing that I would
23 point to is that we actually brought up to the
24 Deputy Chancellor that studies actually show that
25 children who eat breakfast have less behavioral

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2 problems. It makes sense. I think all of us are
3 a little bit grumpy in the morning when we haven't
4 eaten anything. And so I do want to encourage my
5 colleagues to vote yes. I do understand that
6 there are going to be some administrative issues
7 obviously that come with it, and I respect that,
8 but I think hunger is a very real problem in New
9 York City and this is a simple thing that we could
10 do. We're paying for the breakfast anyway. Let's
11 give the kids access. Let's make a difference.
12 That's why I vote aye. Thank you.

13 COMMITTEE CLERK: Ignizio?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER IGNIZIO: Yes, if I
15 can explain my vote, I am wrestling with this in
16 my head as my colleague, Mark Weprin, is because
17 not everybody wants children to be able to eat
18 breakfast. That's not a question that we're
19 taking up here today. I think the concern for me
20 is what are the unintended consequences of serving
21 breakfast in every classroom? I tend to think
22 breakfast, lunch, snacks and whatnot ought be kept
23 more so in the lunchroom, because I think we're
24 giving life to serious sanitation and sanitary
25 concerns in our schools when we are serving meals

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2 in every classroom. I think we ought engage in a
3 situation where by those that are eligible and
4 those that are not encourage or try to help
5 publicize do something to tackle the issue—the
6 core issue that we're talking about here which is
7 children not eating breakfast or availing
8 themselves of eating breakfast in school, but I
9 believe that overall that eating should be taking
10 place in a more sanitary environment such as a
11 lunchroom and not in everyone else's—everyone's
12 classroom giving life to issues that I said be it
13 vermin, bugs, and the associated issues with
14 sanitary conditions of drinking things like milk
15 in the classrooms and having them there then
16 throughout the day in potentially hot classrooms,
17 so I have a legitimate issue about the
18 infrastructure of serving in the classroom not of
19 encouraging children to eat breakfast, which I
20 fear will be the Vinny Ignizio is against
21 breakfast in school. Well, that's not what I'm
22 saying, and it's not what I'm against. I think
23 kids ought eat breakfast. I think we should
24 publicize and enhance the awareness of children
25 getting breakfast. I just have an issue going on

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2 in the school and therefore with all due respect
3 to my colleagues, I'm voting no on these two
4 resolutions.

5 COMMITTEE CLERK: Garodnick?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GARODNICK: I vote
7 aye.

8 COMMITTEE CLERK: Vacca?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER VACCA: I vote aye.

10 COMMITTEE CLERK: By a vote of 12
11 in the affirmative, one in the negative and no
12 abstentions, both items have been adopted.

13 Members, please sign the Committee Reports. Thank
14 you.

15 [background conversation]

16 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: We will hold
17 the roll open until 11:45 a.m.

18 [background conversation]

19 COMMITTEE CLERK: Continuation roll
20 call Committee in Education. Council Member
21 Koppell?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Aye on
23 both.

24 COMMITTEE CLERK: Final vote in the
25 Committee on Education now stands at 13 in the

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affirmative, one in the negative and no

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abstentions, both items have been adopted.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: This hearing

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on Education Committee on Resolution 910-A and

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911-A is hereby adjourned.

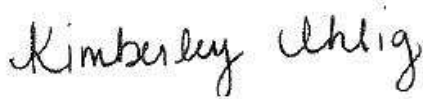
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[gavel]

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Kimberley Uhlig certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.

Signature _____



Date _____9/1/12_____