

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Jointly with

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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May 20, 2025
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HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Justin L. Brannan
Chairperson

Rita C. Joseph
Chairperson

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Eric Dinowitz
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Shahana K. Hanif
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Mercedes Narcisse
Lynn C. Schulman

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

Wilnali Prevalon [sp?]
Seeds in the Middle

Amalia [sp?]
Seeds in the Middle

Alexander Rosario [sp?]
Seeds in the Middle

Nature Walkins [sp?]
Seeds in the Middle

Alexandria Rodriguez [sp?]
Seeds in the Middle

Melissa Aviles-Ramos
New York City Public Schools Chancellor

Daniel Wiesberg
New York City Public Schools First Deputy
Chancellor

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

Christina Foti

NYC Public Schools Deputy Chancellor of the
Division of Inclusive and Accessible Learning

Simone C. Hawkins

NYC Public Schools Deputy Chancellor of Early
Childhood Education

Cristina Melendez

NYC Public Schools Deputy Chancellor of Family,
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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

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Linda Harrington
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Melanie Mac
NYC Public Schools Senior Executive Director of
Office of Student Pathways

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NYC Public Schools Office of Language Access
Executive Director

Maya Contreras
Early College High School

Sophia Ulrich
Teen CPR Team

Genesis Enriques
Teen CPR Team

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

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Teen CPR Team

Henry Rubio
UFT

Maria Morales
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Rosanne Kneubuhl
UFT

Karen Alford
UFT Vice President of Elementary Schools

Tina Puccio
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Mary Vaccaro
Vice President of Education UFT

Sally-Ann Bongiovanni-Famularo
UFT Prose Program

Priscilla Castro
Chapter Chair Para Professionals UFT

Glenys Rivera
UFT, Second Vice President Local 372

Joseph Alisio
Deputy Director of Schools Division SEIU 32BJ

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

Hana Ira
Coalition for Asian American Children and
Families

Ella Wang
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Seaver Chen
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Courtne Thomas
Executive Director Mid Atlantic Project at
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Carina Layfield
High School for Health Professions

Sama Moustafa

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Taliya Carter

Samantha Jimenez Bravo

Sheree Gibson
Funding for NYCPS programs

Mari Moss

Randi Levine
Advocates for Children of New York

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

Gregory Brender
Day Care Council of New York

Leonie Haimson
Class Size Matters

Tanesha Grant
Parents Supporting Parents New York

Jai Nanda
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Zaid Quinones
Urban Dove Team Charter School Bronx

Javier Juarez
Urban Dove Team Charter School Queens

Kyle Mowatt
Urban Dove Team Charter School Brooklyn

Esteban Ozuna
Urban Dove Team Charter School Manhattan

Andrea Alonso Rodriguez
Make the Road New York

Albert Tan
Make the Road New York

Ngawang Sherpa
Make the Road New York

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

Tatyahna Costello
Brotherhood Sister Sol

Long Hui Jang
Coalition for Equitable Education

Kira Ha-Healy
Circle Keepers

Hadia Ali
YA-YA Network

Ibel Nunez
YA-YA Network

Mariama Jallow
YA-YA Network

Avery Severe
Urban Academy High School

Esperanza Vasquez
New Settlement Parent Action Committee

Chauncy Young
Director of Settlement Parent Action Committee

Eman Gad
Girls for Gender Equity

Chaplain Sandra Mitchell

Rahima Kolani
Brotherhood Sister Sol

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

Cai Lin
YA-YA Network

Amina Jallow
YA-YA Network

Yeray Castano
Police Free Schools

Erika Perez
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Amy Heredia
Urban Youth Collaborative, Make the Road New
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Guadalupe Tenantitla

Josh Melendez
Brothers and Sisters United, Urban Youth
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Diaraye Fatoumata Bah
Make the Road New York

May DePierro
Advocates for Children of New York Arise
Coalition

Latasha Wright
BioBus

Olympia Kazi

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

Alexandra Rathmann-Noonan
New York Performance Standards Consortium

Michelle Norris

Paola Martinez-Boone
NYLPI

Michaela Shuchman
Legal Services NYC

Aaron Michael Sanders
Government and Community Relations at Grant
Street Settlement

Paullette Ha-Healy
Coalition for Equitable Education Funding

David Adams
Urban Assembly Chief Executive Officer

Molly Senack
Center for Independence of the Disabled New York

Mark Gonsalves
Co-president of Citywide Council for Special
Education

Amy Tsai
ARISE Coalition

Carolyn Lewis
National Child ID Program

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

Eduardo Antonetti
Advancement for Internationals Network

Daniel
New York Edge

Aaliyah Thomas

Glendaliz Valdez
Committee for Hispanic Children and Families

Christopher Leon Johnson

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning, good
3 morning, and welcome to today's New York City Council
4 Executive Budget hearing for the Committee on Finance
5 joint with the Committee on Education. At this time,
6 we ask that you all silence your electronic devices,
7 and at no time is anyone to approach the dais. Also,
8 there is no eating inside of the chambers. If you'd
9 like to sign up for in-person testimony or have any
10 other questions throughout the hearing, please see
11 one of the Sergeant at Arms. Chair Brannan, we are
12 ready to begin.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you,
14 Sergeant. [gavel] Okay, good morning, everyone, and
15 welcome to day seven of the FY26 Executive Budget
16 hearings. I'm Council Member Justin Brannan. I chair
17 the Committee on Finance. Today's hearing, we're
18 joined by the Department of Education, and I'm
19 pleased to be joined by Council Member Rita Joseph,
20 Chair of the Committee on Education. We've also been
21 joined this morning by Council Member Brooks-Powers,
22 Schulman, Louis, Moya, and Gutiérrez, as well as
23 Sanchez. Welcome, Chancellor, and welcome Seeds in
24 the Middle. I heard you guys on the radio this
25 morning. You did a great job. Look forward to

2 hearing from you today. Also joined by Council
3 Member Dinowitz. Thank you all, Department of
4 Education and Seeds in the Middle guys for joining us
5 and we're-- to answer our questions today. So just
6 to set the table, on May 1st, 2025, the
7 Administration released the Executive Financial Plan
8 for FY26 to 29 with a proposed FY26 budget of \$115.1
9 billion. DOE's proposed FY26 budget of \$34.4 billion
10 represents 30 percent of the Administration's total
11 proposed budget in the Executive Plan. This is an
12 increase of \$860 million for 2.6 percent from the
13 \$33.5 billion budgeted in the FY26 Preliminary Plan
14 earlier this year. This increase primarily results
15 from restoring many of the programs that were
16 formerly funded by federal stimulus dollars and
17 replaced by City dollars for FY25 only. As of March
18 2025, Department of Education had 4,642 vacancies
19 relative to its FY 25 budgeted headcount. In the
20 Council's response to the Preliminary Budget, we
21 called on the Mayor to add millions in additional
22 funding to DOE's budget across a range of programs
23 from school-based nurses to arts funding. We are
24 pleased to the see the majority of these programs not
25 only restored, but also baselined. We're also

2 pleased to see the initial investment of \$150 million
3 in the budget and \$200 million for subsequent out-
4 years to lower class sizes, accounting for additional
5 teacher hires. While we are pleased to see a
6 commitment to the classroom concerns, the
7 Administration did not include the ask for \$10
8 million in additional funding for school food
9 workers, as data shows that the success of our
10 students is not only in the classroom, but also what
11 they consume throughout the day. My question today
12 will largely focus on issues at the federal and state
13 levels, the school food budget, arts education in
14 schools Early Childhood education, and the class size
15 mandate. I now want to turn to my co-chair for this
16 hearing, Council Member Joseph for her opening
17 statement.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Chair
19 Brannan. Good morning and welcome to the Fiscal 2026
20 Executive Budget hearing for the Committee on
21 Education. My name is Rita Joseph and I'm the Chair
22 of the Education Committee. Today, we will be
23 discussing the Department of Education \$34.4 billion
24 Fiscal 2026 budget as presented in the Executive
25 Financial Plan. Thank you to everyone present here

2 and to those of you are testifying remotely. DOE has
3 the largest budget among all City agencies. DOE's
4 budget for Fiscal 2026 is 30 percent of the City's
5 overall budget. It has the largest headcount among
6 City agencies. DOE's 135,786 budgeted positions are
7 45 percent of the City's entire budgeted headcount.
8 As Chair of this committee, I continue to push hard
9 for accountability and accuracy to ensure that the
10 budget for the largest city agency and the largest
11 school system in the country actually reflect the
12 needs and interest of its residents and students. I
13 am pleased to see that the Executive Plan addresses a
14 lot of uncertainty we saw in the Preliminary Plan.
15 However, there continue to be issues with this plan,
16 including gaps in transparency, accelerating due
17 process costs, as well as ongoing funding risks from
18 state and federal levels. While many Council
19 priorities are funded in Fiscal 2026, the Council
20 still seeks to better understand ongoing issues with
21 implementation and how changes in the state and
22 federal budget may impact education in the future.
23 DOE Fiscal 2026 budget in the Executive Plan is
24 \$860.3 million more than it was in the Preliminary
25 Plan. This is due to the restoration of funding for

2 multiple programs that previously were not fully
3 funded past the past current year. This includes
4 funding for Early Childhood education, \$112 million
5 for 3K seats, \$55 million for preschool special
6 education seats, \$25 million for the Council extended
7 day pilot, and \$5 million for outreach and marketing;
8 \$192 million of this funding is baselined which means
9 parent can rely on thousands of extended day seats
10 made possible through the Council's extended day
11 pilot and the additional preschool special education
12 seats without having to worry if these programs will
13 be funded in the following year. Additionally, many
14 programs that were formerly funded with federal
15 stimulus dollars and replaced with City funding for
16 Fiscal 2025 have been restored in Fiscal 2026 and
17 beyond. This includes \$41 million in arts funding,
18 \$14 million to fund over 80 community schools, \$10
19 million for affinity [sic] school networks, and \$4
20 million for high impact tutoring. This is a victory
21 for students, teachers, and communities. However,
22 there are multiple council priorities that were not
23 funded in the Executive Plan. Student Success Centers
24 still face an uncertain future, and our school food
25 workers and mental health services continue to be

2 under-funded. These enhancements and services were
3 not added as outlined in the Council's budget
4 response. We will continue to push for these
5 programs to ensure, as the Mayor has stated, that
6 this truly is the best budget ever. While funding
7 and baselining all these programs is critical, I am
8 also continually fighting for better transparency and
9 better implementation of funding. Delivering quality
10 education for our students does not end when-- once
11 funds are allocated in the budget. That is only the
12 beginning. There continues to be concern about high
13 vacancy rates in our Early Childhood education
14 programs, long wait lists for preschool special
15 education seats, and mandated services. The budget
16 for due process case which includes Carter and Connor
17 [sic] cases continue to grow, increasing from \$645.7
18 million at adoption to \$1.3 billion in the Executive
19 Plan for Fiscal 2025. Such drastic in-year increases
20 make it difficult to analyze the true cost and plan
21 for other funding needs. Schools, bus contracts need
22 changes, and in the meantime, many students
23 especially students with disabilities, students in
24 temporary housing and foster care face excessively
25 long route and delays. Current contracts still does

2 not allow for transportation after school day,
3 preventing students who rely on buses from fully
4 participating in after-school and summer programming.
5 While we see issues with implementation in some
6 areas, we also want to recognize programs that are
7 succeeding. Two programs for students with autism,
8 Horizon and Nest, have a 97 percent four-year
9 graduation rate, higher than the general education
10 graduation rate. These programs have long wait lists
11 because parents know they are effective. However,
12 these programs do not receive any additional funding
13 in the Executive Plan. Unpacking, focusing on any of
14 these issues, does not dismiss the great strides made
15 in the Executive Plan. Looking ahead to next school
16 year, the Council aims to continue to be a partner
17 with the Department of Education, not only to address
18 any issues but also uplifting programs offered for
19 our young people and their families. This kind of
20 partnership includes creating contingency plan for
21 what seems to be inevitable cuts of the federal
22 funding. If any of these programs face threats of
23 federal funding cuts, we want to be able to say that
24 we have stayed ready so we don't have to get ready.
25 I look forward to discussion on these concerns this

2 morning with Chancellor Aviles-Ramos and her team,
3 and now I will turn it back over to Chair Brannan.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. First this
5 morning we're going to hear from a student panel. So
6 we have Alexander Rosario [sp?], Alexandra Rodriguez
7 [sp?], Nature Walkins [sp?], Amalia [sp?], and
8 Wilnali Prevalon [sp?]. You guys all here? Okay.
9 Who wants to start their testimony? Okay, you want
10 to start? Go ahead. Just say your name and then you
11 can begin.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Press the button.
13 There you go. You can do a mic check, go ahead.

14 WILNALI PREVALON: Good morning, my name
15 is Wilnali. I'm 13 years old, and I attend IS68
16 Middle School. Along with my fellow Student
17 Government leaders, I am proud to be working with
18 Seeds in the Middle to bring fresh fruits and
19 vegetables right here in front of our school so we
20 can sell it to our community at affordable price.
21 We're doing this because finding affordable healthy
22 food in our neighborhood can be really difficult.
23 While other communities have markets full of fresh
24 produce, I walk around mine only to see expensive and
25 processed food. How are we supposed to make healthy

2 choices if we're never given the chance to. To be
3 honest fruit juice lover, I've never really loved
4 orange juice until I tried the fresh-squeezed orange
5 juice that we were selling at our market. That moment
6 made me realize how fresh food can actually change a
7 person. It was so refreshing and it had so much
8 flavor in it that I saw the difference between the
9 market-bought orange juice. Also, while preparing
10 for upcoming District 18 presentation, I've been
11 researching how food labels can be confusing to
12 understand and also misleading. Right now, I have a
13 better understanding of how tricky it can be to know
14 what food is actually healthy to eat. Everyone
15 deserve access to fresh food that can bring both joy
16 and health into their lives. That's why Seeds in the
17 Middle needs your support. With more funding they
18 can expand and create more fresh food market like in
19 communities like ours. Your help won't just sure
20 support student leadership, it'll also improve the
21 health and well-being of the whole neighborhood.
22 Thank you for listening, and thank you for believing
23 in our future.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Where do
25 you go to school, what borough?

2 WILNALI PREVALON: I go to IS68 Middle
3 School.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Where's that?

5 WILNALI PREVALON: It's in Canarsi.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Cool. Could we get
7 quiet in the chamber, please? Okay, just say your
8 name and you can begin.

9 AMALIA: Good morning. My name is Amalia.
10 I am a student of Meyer Levin Performance Art. I'm
11 asking you today to give money to the Seed in the
12 Middle so that we can continue to grow our farm,
13 because we don't want people of our community get
14 diabetes and heart disease. In my community there's
15 a lot of fast-food place and a very few affordable
16 price, and we are the highest of the obesity and
17 heart disease. Our community needs your help to give
18 us a chance to live a healthier life. It's important
19 to have access to fresh fruit and vegetable because
20 we want people to eat healthy. One way for people to
21 have access to fruit and vegetable is through a farm
22 stand. At my school Meyer Levin, we have two farm
23 stand and people from our community came out to
24 purchase our fresh produce at our discounted price.
25 Our farm, we're able to [inaudible]member of our

2 community and they were happy to have access to fresh
3 fruit and vegetable. This experience make me feel
4 happy because I was able to talk to my community
5 about different variety and help them to get
6 nutritional needs, and [inaudible] happy [sic].
7 Everyone deserve to be healthy including us. Fund
8 Seed in the Middle. Bonjour. [speaking French]

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [speaking French] Go
10 ahead.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: You ready?

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You ready?

13 ALEXANDER ROSARIO: Hello?

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Hello.

15 ALEXANDER ROSARIO: Hello. My name is
16 Alexander Rosario and I am from PS235 in Janice Marie
17 Knight School in East Flatbush in New York, in
18 Brooklyn, New York, and I'm here today to represent
19 my school and our farmer's market organization, Seeds
20 in the Middle, and why we should eat more fresh fruit
21 and vegetables. We should eat more fresh fruit and
22 vegetables because it helps us grow our body and
23 mind. It has nutrients that are good for our body
24 and nutrients help us get a stronger immune system.
25 So if you get hurt or catch an illness, our immune

2 system will prevent and protect our body. Examples
3 of healthy foods are apples, oranges, bananas,
4 lettuce, salad, and etcetera. If we eat healthy
5 foods, we will have a better life. In District 18
6 there aren't many healthy stores in the area. Most
7 stores in District 18 don't offer healthy options,
8 but from our farm stand we provide a variety of
9 healthy food options like vegetables and fruits
10 rather than junk food. The reason why we should try
11 and have access to fruits and vegetables is because
12 if you are far away and your neighborhood does not
13 have access to fresh healthy foods, it makes it
14 harder and less fortunate to get to places with
15 healthy foods. If you are not eating fruit and
16 vegetables or healthy food and you are eating too
17 much junk food, your body can fill up with plaque or
18 other toxins causing heart failure or a heart attack.
19 Another detail is that if you are eating too much
20 sugar and salt, you can diabetes or high blood
21 pressure, but eating fruits and healthy options and
22 not too much junk food, we can prevent those illness.
23 It should be equal to other neighborhoods and provide
24 healthy foods to keep the people in the community
25 healthy. Fresh nearby foods can give the option to

2 people to chose healthy foods and have access to
3 them. How we can expand and grow our business with a
4 larger budget: we can expand and grow our business
5 with a larger budget because the extra money will
6 help us expand our business and our menu. We make
7 get access to a larger area to farm and grow some of
8 our products. We also may get fruits and vegetables
9 to sell and upgrade our supplies. We can upgrade our
10 stand and get a menu sign so our customers will have
11 the opportunity to look at our products and prices.
12 We can have other options like a juicer to make fresh
13 refreshing juice as another option for our customers.
14 Also, we can give discounts with a larger budget or
15 have deals if we have more money and a larger budget,
16 and that will allows us to have more customers. And
17 all the money goes to the school for the program t
18 get more fruits and vegetables, and we need money to
19 expand the program, and it's for a good cause. We
20 can use the money to help District 18 or if enough
21 programs and organizations notice, maybe New York or
22 Brooklyn. We can also have the program more than
23 once a week, and with the larger budget we can maybe
24 have the selling year-round instead of once a week.
25 Tiers of supermarket in stores: there are different

2 tiers of supermarkets like tier one or tier S with
3 good quality fruit and vegetables, but they might be
4 more expensive and a little bit farther away from
5 your community. Tier two or tier A which is decent
6 and okay fruits and vegetables. Tier three, also
7 known as tier B, which has less quality and maybe
8 rotten fruits and vegetables, but cheap so it might
9 convince you buy it. Tier four is tier C which is
10 bad, old, and almost completely rotten fruits and
11 vegetables, and tier five or tier D, which is the
12 worst tier of all, with completely rotten, not fresh
13 and dented fruits and vegetables, but our farmer's
14 market can provide tier one but with decent and fair
15 prices, offering customers and even District 18 fresh
16 fruits and vegetables, and District 18 might start to
17 spread with even better supermarkets and stores.

18 Conclusion: in conclusion, our members of our
19 farmer's market, my school and I hope that this
20 speech was convincing enough to catch your attention,
21 and we might get some money to keep this program
22 going. We wish to spread even more healthy foods
23 around District 18 or our community to keep the
24 community and the people healthy. Well, it was nice
25 presenting my speech to you all, and thank you for

2 your undivided attention. It was nice meeting you
3 and have the opportunity to share this speech with
4 you. Have a nice day. Thank you.

5 [applause]

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

7 NATURE WALKINS: Good morning, everyone.

8 My name is Nature Walkins. I thank you all for
9 giving me this chance, and I ask that you can give
10 Seeds in the Middle more money so they can help our
11 neighborhood, because even at school-- even at stores
12 around my neighborhood they would only have bananas
13 for two days and they already turned spoiled. And
14 there's not a fruits and vegetables, and even the
15 ones that are there, they're so expensive so it's
16 really hard to buy them, and the prices are really
17 high. I ask that you give Seeds in the Middle more
18 money, because Seeds in the Middle helps that. When
19 Seeds in the Middle comes to schools and explains to
20 kids why it's healthy to eat fruits and vegetables,
21 they even bring fresh snacks and fruits and
22 vegetables that are really delicious and a lot of the
23 fruits they do really taste fresh. And when I-- when
24 Seeds in the Middle first came and they first told us
25 about eating healthy, they told us about diseases

2 that you can catch that you would get if you don't
3 eat healthy like heart disease and diabetes. They
4 also told us that there's no cure to diabetes. So,
5 if you get it, you can't get rid of it. So that's
6 why we ask if you could give Seeds in the Middle more
7 money so Seeds in the Middle can build farmer markets
8 for schools and other places so we can have fresh
9 fruits and vegetables at corner stores and
10 supermarkets, because then we would have a less risk
11 of getting diseases like diabetes and heart disease,
12 and people could be more healthy. And we also ask
13 that you can give Seeds in the Middle much more
14 money, because they can continue to come to our
15 schools and help the kids, and they could even build
16 my school a farmer's market. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

18 [applause]

19 ALEXANDRIA RODRIGUEZ: Hello, I'm
20 Alexandria Rodriguez, and I go to Liberation Diploma
21 Plus High School in Coney Island. I would like for
22 you guys to help us fund Seeds in the Middle, because
23 in Coney Island there is no fresh fruit anywhere in
24 any supermarket. They're all left days and days.
25 There's nearly 60 bodegas that sell junk food and

2 people of color and the Latinos get diabetes and
3 heart disease nearly two times the rate of other
4 people. The point that I'm trying to get is we need
5 to fund Seeds in the Middle so everyone including
6 Coney Island has the same chance to eat healthy and
7 not get these diseases. I also have PCOS so I also
8 have to travel far to get all these fresh nutrients
9 for my body just to make sure I'm okay. I would like
10 to say thank, and thank you for giving me this
11 chance.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Alexandria's your
13 name? We actually-- so I represent Coney Island, and
14 we just started a farm stand with Seeds in the Middle
15 outside the library once a week. So, we hope we can
16 expand it from there, but it's good to see you. Thank
17 you.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Good to see you. So
19 now I'm going to have shout out my school PS235 for
20 being here. I fund their farm, too. But this is the
21 investment when we make in young people. So, the
22 Chancellor's right there. She's listening to you
23 right now. She's sitting right there. Chancellor,
24 wave at the kids. This is why we fight. This is why
25 we work so hard to make sure you have all that you

2 need. So, I have a couple of questions. What is
3 your favorite part of Seeds in the Middle? Anyone of
4 you can answer. Go ahead.

5 WILNALI PREVALON: The fact that we get
6 to taste delicious fruits, because as I said before,
7 the fruits that we buy from, like, usual supermarkets
8 that are even far away from here are much more
9 expensive, and we also get freebies, like, after,
10 like, selling to customers. We get to, like, drink a
11 cup of orange juice. And you know how it's hot, and
12 drinking a cup of orange juice on a hot day is the
13 best thing.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you for your
15 advocacy. And what do you want to-- where do you
16 want to expand the farmer's market?

17 WILNALI PREVALON: Like, all around
18 Canarsi in all our neighborhoods, every community,
19 because not every community has the opportunities to
20 have markets all around where people could just drive
21 by and buy fruits. That's why we want to make the
22 fresh fruit market stands.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And what are some of
24 the new fresh fruits that you've discovered through
25 this program? Anything new, exciting?

2 WILNALI PREVALON: Nothing new, but I
3 could say, like, the mangoes that we sell, those are
4 really tasty.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I need some, too.

6 WILNALI PREVALON: Yeah.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: We're good. We're
8 good. Thank you for your advocacy. Continue to be
9 the great leaders that you are. The City needs your
10 voice more than ever, and you are now, not the
11 future, but you are the now. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all very
13 much. Okay, so before we get started with the rest of
14 our hearing, we've been joined by Council Members
15 Fariás, Hanif, Williams, Hudson, Carr, and Lee. I
16 also want to take a quick moment to thank the entire
17 City Council Finance Division staff for their
18 efforts preparing for these hearings, especially
19 Aliyah Ali [sp?], Andrew Lane Lawless [sp?], and
20 Grace Amato [sp?] for today's hearing and all the
21 folks back at Finance control, mission control that
22 make these hearings happen. As a reminder, for this
23 year's Executive Budget joint hearings, we're going
24 to take full public testimony later today after the
25 DOE has testified and we've asked questions. So, if

2 you wish to speak on the DOE FY26 Executive Budget,
3 make sure you fill out a witness slip with the
4 Sergeant at Arms in the back, and now I'm going to
5 turn it over to our Committee Counsel to swear in our
6 witnesses, and we'll give DOE a sec to come up to the
7 dais.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good morning. Do you
9 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing
10 but the truth before this committee and to respond
11 honestly to Council Member questions? Chancellor
12 Aviles-Ramos?

13 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: I do.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: First Deputy
15 Weisberg?

16 FIRST DEPUTY WEISBERG: I do.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Deputy Vadehra?

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: I do.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Officer Scott?

20 OFFICER SCOTT: I do.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And will additional
22 members be-- alright, so--Doctor Logan? Or, well--
23 sorry. Deputy Foti?

24 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: I do.

25 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Officer Moran?

2 OFFICER MORAN: I do.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Director Mac? Chief
4 Dali [sp?]? Chief Hammer [sic]? Officer Kelly?
5 Director Thompson?

6 DIRECTOR THOMPSON: I do.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Admin Hems [sp?]?
8 Officer Foti? Chief Puello-Perdomo? Director
9 Rampersant?

10 DIRECTOR RAMPERSANT: I do.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: General Counsel
12 Vladeck? Deputy Chancellor Hawkins? Deputy
13 Chancellor Rux? Deputy Chancellor Melendez?
14 President Gonzalez [sp?]? President Kantin [sp?]?
15 Director Barnett [sp?]? Director Haris [sp?]?
16 Director Palma? You may begin.

17 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Good morning,
18 Chair Brannan, Chair Joseph, and members of the
19 Council Committees on Finance and Education. Thank
20 you for inviting me to testify on the Mayor's FY26
21 Executive Budget. I am Melissa Aviles-Ramos,
22 Chancellor of New York City Public Schools and I am
23 joined by First Deputy Chancellor Daniel Weisberg,
24 Deputy Chancellor of Operations and Finance Emma
25 Vadehra, and Chief Financial Officer Seritta Scott.

2 At New York Public Schools, our Fiscal Year 2026
3 Executive Budget totals approximately \$42.2 billion
4 which includes \$34.4 billion in operating resources
5 and another \$7.8 billion for education-related
6 pension and service funds. This is nearly a billion
7 dollar increase over the FY25 budget, and I want to
8 thank the Mayor and this Council for their deep
9 investment in our school communities. As I marked
10 seven months since assuming the role as Chancellor,
11 I'd like to take this opportunity to reflect on the
12 progress we've made, both in recent months and over
13 the past few years. I am immensely proud of the work
14 we've done at New York City Public Schools to build
15 bold futures for every child. At the start of this
16 administration we looked closely at the data and what
17 we saw was unacceptable. Large swaths of our
18 children were below grade level in reading and math
19 and many of our older students were struggling to
20 find a clear purpose and path after high school. We
21 made it our priority to tackle these long-standing
22 challenges resulting in four strategic,
23 transformative initiatives: New York City reads, New
24 York City Solves, Student Pathways, and New York City
25 Public School cares. New York City Reads and Solves

2 our ground-breaking efforts to standardize curricula
3 across New York City and link instruction to
4 evidence-based practices. These programs, I'm proud
5 to say, are supported by both public and
6 philanthropic dollars, demonstrating a deep
7 commitment across stakeholders and ensuring the
8 sustainability and appetite for this work for years
9 to come. We have continued to expand these
10 initiatives to encompass more and more of our 1,600
11 schools. We already have over 800 elementary schools,
12 400 high schools and 100 middle schools on board, and
13 most recently we grew New York City Reads to include
14 grades six to eight for the first time. This
15 administration has also committed \$3.4 million to
16 establish the Central Brooklyn Literacy Academy for
17 students with dyslexia and language-based
18 disabilities and to expand the I-Read program. And
19 finally, we paired our New York City Reads and Solves
20 rollout with extensive professional development and
21 coaching along with streamlining our approach to tier
22 two and tier three interventions. And we are seeing
23 the results. Visits to over 17,500 classrooms show
24 that the curricula are being consistently implemented
25 and surveys reveal that over 75 percent of teachers

2 and leaders believe the support they're receiving is
3 effective. We have trained nearly 3,000 parents and
4 family members as New York City Reads Ambassadors,
5 and 97 percent of these families have reported a
6 positive impact on their child's reading. As our
7 students gain fundamental literacy and math skills,
8 we also need to guide them to a future full of
9 possibilities. Our Student Pathways work reimagines
10 the high school experience to prepare our students
11 for high-demand careers in technology, healthcare,
12 business, education, and more. Our signature Future
13 Ready NYC program has grown to serve over 15,000
14 students across 135 schools, partnering with major
15 employers including Google, Northwell Health,
16 Memorial Sloan Kettering and many others. Our
17 analysis shows that our Future Ready schools despite
18 having higher than average economic need compared to
19 other schools across the City have statistically,
20 significantly higher rates of attendance and higher
21 GPAs. We have also increased a number of students
22 getting early college credits with CUNY by 10 percent
23 in the last two years and we are seeing impressive
24 results among high schools under advanced placement
25 participation and performance. In 2024, a record 45

2 percent of seniors took at least AP exam while in
3 high school, and over a quarter of all seniors passed
4 at least one AP exam. The number of students passing
5 these tests increased this year by more than 12
6 percent, including a 15 percent increase among Black
7 and Hispanic student. But we are not stopping there.
8 We are launching multiple innovative high school
9 programs in the fall, including the Northwell School
10 of Health Science, HBCU Early College Prep, Queens
11 International High School and the Bronx STEAM Center.
12 These are just a few of the 28 new schools opened in
13 this administration. And finally, this spring we
14 announced our newest signature initiative, NYCPS Care
15 aligned to my commitment to students' safety and
16 wellness, educative support and family empowerment.
17 Currently, NYCPS Cares includes student-led anti-
18 bullying and anti-vaping campaigns and a new Family
19 Connector's Program, empowering our families to share
20 city resources and services with their communities as
21 reliable and trusted messengers. This initiative
22 feels even more urgent in light of the tragic loss of
23 one of our 16-year-old students just last week, a
24 victim of senseless gun violence. We have so much
25 work to do to ensure our students are physically and

2 emotionally safe, and we are counting on you as a
3 partner in this work. We know that if students are
4 not safe and well, they cannot learn, and we will
5 have more to share in the coming weeks about how we
6 are continuing to roll out and expand NYCPS Cares. In
7 addition to these signature initiatives, the Mayor's
8 Executive Budget supports numerous other game-
9 changing investments, including hundreds of millions
10 of dollars in baseline funding to ensure program
11 continuity. This investment starts with our youngest
12 learners. I'm thrilled and grateful that the City
13 will now invest \$167 million in pre-k special
14 education and 3K seats, along with supporting our
15 Head Start program in a moment of federal funding
16 uncertainty. This represents a tremendous step
17 forward in the long-term sustainability of Early
18 Childhood education in New York City. This
19 Administration's investment in our children continues
20 as they grow. To ensure compliance with the class
21 size mandate, the city has commitment to funding
22 3,700 new teaching positions as well as over \$20
23 million for teacher recruitment. Additionally, the
24 administration recently announced an increased
25 investment in after-school programming beginning next

2 school year as well as baseline funding in the arts.

3 In addition, this budget recognizes the importance of

4 health, wellbeing and safety, baselining \$194 million

5 for school nurses, \$15 million for Project Pivot, \$14

6 million for community schools, and \$6 million for

7 Restorative Justice, plus another \$6 million in

8 Restorative Justice funding for this year

9 specifically. These investments will help us

10 continue to reduce chronic absenteeism, improve

11 safety in and around schools and ensure our students

12 are mentally and physically well. As I mentioned

13 earlier, this work is critically important, and I

14 hope you all feel the same sense of urgency. I know

15 you all feel the same sense of urgency. Although

16 there is still much work to be done, I also want to

17 note steps in the right direction, specifically our

18 safer access door-locking initiative will be 99

19 percent complete by the end of the summer. This

20 school year we have placed over 300 social work

21 interns in schools and trained 7,000 teachers in

22 mindful breathing, and this school year we have

23 opened 29 school-based mental health clinics. This

24 budget also backfills and baselines expired federal

25 stimulus dollars for key programs such as Civics for

2 All, Computer Science Education, tutoring, and more,
3 and the budget extends another fiscal year of funding
4 for highly successful programs like Summer Rising.
5 Combined, these investments will be instrumental in
6 helping us fully realize our mission. I want to
7 thank this Council and Mayor Adams for your ongoing
8 partnership, especially given the disappointing news
9 on the foundation aid formula changes which will
10 result in \$314 million less for our students and
11 families than under the previous formula. Support
12 for this from this body is even more important. As
13 you know, city tax levy money is our largest source
14 of revenue projected to be at 59 percent this
15 upcoming fiscal year and the Council plays a vital
16 role in advocating across all levels of government on
17 behalf of our schools. We rely on your continued
18 collaboration for much-needed resources. To that end,
19 thank you, Chair Joseph, for being a champion for our
20 children. Thank you, Chair Brannan, for your
21 advocacy for arts education funding. Thank you to
22 Council Member Dinowitz for always pushing for more
23 equitable access to services and to Council Member
24 Stevens for helping build strong partnerships with
25 CBOs, and thank you to the entire Council and

2 Education Committee for your collaboration and
3 support. Looking back over the past three and a half
4 years of this administration, I want to close with a
5 summary of where we stand and a sampling of what we
6 achieved. We are keeping students and staff in
7 school. We stabilized enrollment post-pandemic
8 welcoming over 50,000 of our newest New Yorkers.
9 Attendance is up 1.5 points and chronic absenteeism
10 is down 5.4 points since the 2021-22 school year.
11 Teacher retention is at nearly 95 percent. We are
12 ensuring students learn. K-2 reading screener scores
13 are up four points since spring 2022; 3-8 math scores
14 are up 15.5 points over the same time period. Summer
15 Rising has shown statistically significant impact on
16 academic outcomes. We are serving students with
17 diverse needs. We added 1,400 specialized autism
18 programs seats since 2022, and ASE, Horizon, and Nest
19 have a 97 percent graduation rate. We added 103 new
20 bilingual programs since 2022. Due process
21 complaints are down 30 percent from last school year,
22 and we are preparing students for bold futures with
23 post-secondary enrollment increased nearly five
24 points in the last two years, and our high schoolers
25 have earned \$18 million in work-based learning. As

2 the accomplishments and data points shared in this
3 testimony demonstrate, when we invest in our
4 children, students and families we see real and
5 impactful results. Thank you. And we look forward
6 to answering questions.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you,
8 Chancellor. I want to jump right in. All of our
9 hearings are sort of a shadow cast over everything
10 because of the Trump administration continuing to
11 threaten funding and certainly we are incredibly
12 concerned about the continues threat to cutting
13 funding to education. The FY26 budget for New York
14 City Public Schools includes \$2 billion in federal
15 funding, but obviously it's still uncertain how much
16 of this funding will be provided or cut. Could you
17 talk a bit about what the contingency plans are in
18 case the assumed level of federal funding does not
19 materialize?

20 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Morning and
21 thank you for the question. So, yes, just so we're
22 clear, there's a little bit over \$2 billion and I
23 know we've talked about this before, but so folks
24 know that's both funding from the Department of
25 Education for many of our most vulnerable students.

2 It's also our school breakfast and lunch programs,
3 and so it's really funding across our school system
4 and across a few different federal agencies actually.
5 We have not been hit by any funding cuts to date, but
6 we are obviously very closely tracking along with our
7 OMB partners everything that's coming out and
8 checking for any impact on us. And we are in an
9 endless conversation with them about what contingency
10 plans will be. Until we actually see what happens,
11 it's hard to know specifically what the impact will
12 be and how we'll work together to adjust. We'll
13 prioritize our most vulnerable students and the
14 funds that support them, of course, but we're in
15 ongoing conversations with them about that.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Are there areas
17 that the \$2 million covers? Could you tell us
18 precisely what programs that covers, or? I had a
19 question about the 21st century Community Learning
20 Center, because I know that funds about 30 community
21 schools. So, there's a lot of concern on this.

22 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Yeah, so I
23 can give some examples of what it's funding and we're
24 happy to submit the full list as well as dollar
25 amounts and school amounts.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Sure. Give us like
3 the top five.

4 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Yeah. So,
5 the largest funding stream we receive is Title I from
6 the U.S. Department of Education which goes to all of
7 our schools, actually, to support student in
8 temporary housing and almost all to support our low-
9 income school communities. School food, school
10 breakfast and lunch is the second-largest funding
11 stream we receive. The individuals-- which is from
12 the USDA-- Individuals with Disabilities Education
13 Act supporting our students with disabilities across
14 our schools. The third, 21st Century Community
15 Learning Centers supporting our CBOs and afterschool
16 programs is in there as well; Title III, supporting
17 our English language learner programs, Title II
18 supporting our teachers are some of the major funding
19 streams.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. I'll talk a
21 bit about the school foundation aid. Executive Plan
22 includes an additional \$287 million in state
23 foundation aid funding, yet the amount of state
24 school funding reflected in the Executive Plan is
25 below the amount of school aid funding the City

2 received in the state's enacted budget. So as a
3 result, we assume that additional foundation aid and
4 overall school aid will be added to the financial
5 plan. So based on the enacted state budget, how much
6 additional foundation aid above what is currently
7 budgeted will the City be receiving?

8 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: So, in total
9 we will be receiving an additional \$539 million. As
10 you know, that's less than we had expected to receive
11 under the previous formula. As you also know, the
12 state budget wasn't enacted yet at the time of the
13 adopted budget, but we do expect to receive roughly
14 an additional \$250 million by the time of our adopted
15 budget.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And how much--

17 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: [interposing]

18 And--

19 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: How much of that is
20 restricted versus unrestricted?

21 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: \$240 million
22 is restricted for Contracts for Excellence funding
23 which will of course be a large part of-- not all of,
24 but a large part of how we fund our schools to hire
25 3,700 teachers as part of our class size planning for

2 next year. So, the City put in some funding for that
3 in the Executive Budget, and then we'll be adding
4 state funding and additional city funding if adopted
5 [sic].

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. We had ACS
7 here yesterday and obviously spoke a lot about the
8 vouchers. ACS has obviously raised concerns around a
9 potential \$1 billion gap in funding to support the
10 program. What would the impact to the DOE's Early
11 Childhood education system's capacity be if the
12 potential funding gap for the ACS vouchers remains?

13 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: Morning.
14 Thank you. Good morning. Just restating my name,
15 Simone Hawkins, Deputy Chancellor Early Childhood
16 Education.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: Of course.
19 And so, it's important to note that ACS is our
20 oversight for CCBG funded seats which includes
21 vouchers and what is also known as extended day in
22 year seats, EDY. And so, although those seats all
23 come from the same funding stream, they do to your
24 point fund different types of seats and slots. So,
25 vouchers versus contracted care which is under us.

2 And so, we work very closely with ACS in support of
3 this population knowing that we are very thankful for
4 the support of sustaining care for families who are
5 recertifying, but also knowing that we need to
6 support any new applicants, and so we do have a
7 significant number of EDY seats, about 20,000. They
8 do go under-enrolled. They're means tested seats,
9 and as of today, about 11,000 of those 20,000 seats
10 are enrolled. They support toddlers, threes and
11 fours. And so, we are working with ACS to really
12 help families route their way to contracted care in
13 the case that they can't find a voucher-funded-- any
14 voucher-funded care.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, our numbers
16 show that about 20,000 kids rely on ACS vouchers,
17 does that sound right?

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: I cannot
19 confirm, but if ACS confirmed that number, I would
20 defer to them.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, it's our
22 understanding that ACS transfers some of the block
23 grant funding to DOE for some of the ECE seats?

24

25

2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: that's
3 correct. Those are the EDY seats I was just
4 referring to.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. So, can you
6 just confirm for us-- you don't have to do it this
7 second, but maybe you can get it by the end of the
8 hearing, that that 20,000 number is accurate?
9 Because it's what we have.

10 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: Okay, we'll
11 try to reach out to ACS to confirm the numbers.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: How much does ACS
13 transfer to DOE every year?

14 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: So, I think
15 for that, I believe it's about \$16 million, but let
16 me confirm that number, and I'll also verify that
17 with my team.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: We see about \$125
19 million in CCBG funding recognizing DOE's budget.

20 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: That probably
21 is accurate. Let me confirm. I'm sorry, yeah, it is
22 \$125. Excuse me.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Does that funding
24 depend on the childcare voucher gap being addressed?

2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: No, it's
3 separate. It's again, it's all-- it's specifically
4 for EDY contracted care seats.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And then if that
6 funding is not available next year, what happens?

7 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: That funding
8 is available next year, and so we are planning
9 accordingly with ACS to sustain our EDY contracted
10 seats.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. We'll talk
12 about Early Childhood education. So, in the Mayor's
13 message that accompany the FY26 Executive Budget, the
14 Administration provided enrollment data across
15 general education, special ed, and Early Childhood
16 education. This data differs from the info that was
17 in the Mayor's Management Report. So, at the
18 Committee on Education hearing back in January on
19 special education services, DOE testified that there
20 are 32,000 preschoolers with IEPs. Similarly, in the
21 Prelim FY25 MMR it was reported that there were
22 31,500 preschool students with IEP settings last
23 year. However, in the Mayor's message, it was
24 reported that there are 40,000 preschool students in
25

2 the special education settings. Can you explain the
3 discrepancy in these enrollment numbers?

4 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: Good morning.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Good morning.

6 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: Christina Foti,
7 Deputy Chancellor overseeing Special Education and
8 Multilingual Learners. I cannot explain the
9 discrepancy. The number that I have here is 28,202,
10 but what I will do is certainly go back and look at
11 each of those and potentially provide a follow-up
12 with where that might have gotten--

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: [interposing] Okay,
14 so 28,202 preschoolers with IEPs?

15 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: Correct.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. And how many
17 preschoolers with IEPs do we anticipate enrolling for
18 FY26?

19 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: So, in terms of
20 our anticipated enrollment, I do not have the--
21 because preschool special education is rolling and we
22 cannot make-- it's not the typical pipelines where we
23 can look at birth data. At 2.9 a child is evaluated,
24 is eligible for an evaluation and determination is
25 made, and so it's not the same as Pre-K for All where

2 we can look at-- right? It's rolling data, but what
3 I can say is if we're looking at special education
4 seats in the upcoming year, we do expect to have a
5 seat thanks to the \$55 million baselined investment,
6 and thank you Chair Joseph for that. So we do expect
7 to have seats and enrollment is going to be rolling.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Thank you.
9 I want to stay on Early Childhood for a sec. On 3K
10 enrollment, the letters came out today, I believe.

11 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: They will be
12 released today, later this afternoon.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Were they
14 delayed for some reason?

15 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: No.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I thought there was
17 an original date of the 15th?

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: So, Pre-k offers
19 were released last week, I believe on the 12th-- the
20 13th. Thank you, Trevonda. And 3K was always
21 scheduled for today.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. How many
23 people applied? How many people will be getting
24 seats? How many wait-listed?

2 CHIEF ENROLLMENT OFFICER KELLY: Good
3 morning, Trevonda Kelly, Chief Enrollment Officer.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Good morning.

5 CHIEF ENROLLMENT OFFICER KELLY: In terms
6 of applicants for Pre-K we had 51,613 applicants. We
7 made offers to all of those applicants, totaling
8 55,582. For 3K, 43,206 applicants, and again, we
9 made offers to every applicant, totaling 44,386. In
10 terms of the wait list-- the wait list question in
11 terms of how many people were added to the wait list,
12 what we can say is that 65 percent of applicants
13 actually received their first choice, which means
14 that those are the families who did not-- they were
15 not added to the wait list, because the way that the
16 wait list works, if you don't get your first offer,
17 then we add you to the wait list for all of your
18 other preferred choices. If you get your first
19 offer, then we assume that that was your preferred
20 choice, and so therefore you're not added to the wait
21 list. So, in terms of how many families are on the
22 wait list right now for more preferred program, it
23 would be everything outside of the 65 percent who got
24 their first offer, their first choice, excuse me.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And do you have a
3 sense of how many got offers that were close to their
4 home where they live?

5 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER KELLY: Well,
6 based on preference, 65 percent of them got something
7 that they wanted which is their first choice. 85
8 percent of families actually got an offer off their
9 application. So, we're talking about the 15 percent
10 who we actually place offers manually made an offer
11 to them that was not on their applications. There
12 are small percentage of families who did not get
13 something that may not be close to home.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay.

15 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: I
16 could just add to that, Chair. Sorry. You know,
17 because I know we have many parents that are getting
18 these offers for the four-year-olds that got last
19 week, for three-year-olds are getting it this week.
20 If the small percentage that Trevonda is talking
21 about that didn't get an offer to any of the sites
22 they listed, Trevonda says they're automatically
23 wait-listed for all the sites that they did put on
24 their application. So, just because you-- maybe
25 you're one of the families that got an offer to a

2 site that isn't close to home or just isn't the one
3 you wanted for whatever reason, you have a reasonable
4 chance over the course of the summer as things shake
5 out to get an offer from one of those sites you did
6 list on the application. Just want to make sure
7 people understand that. You can even register for
8 the site which you were given the offer. That does
9 not mean that you can't then get an offer and
10 register at a different place off the wait list. So,
11 the basic message is, if you're one of that small
12 percentage of families that didn't get an offer to
13 the place you're really looking for doesn't mean you
14 might not get that offer because you're on the wait
15 list over the course of the summer.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. I'm going to
17 kick it over to Chair Joseph and then I'll be back.
18 Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Thank
20 you, Chair Brannan. Quick question, so altogether
21 how many seats do you have open? How many seats do
22 you have in all?

23 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: I'm
24 sorry, Chair--

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] How
3 many available seats you have in Early Childhood?

4 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: In
5 Early Childhood.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many seats do
7 you have?

8 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: This mic
9 won't let me be great. So, we have about 130,000
10 capacity.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: 103,000 capacity.

12 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: 30,000,
13 30,000.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: 130,000?

15 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: Correct.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: But 51,000 seats--
17 families applied for seats?

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: So, just to
19 be clear, and I don't want to misquote Trevonda's
20 numbers, but in regards to Pre-K, I think you
21 mentioned about 50,000 applicants for Pre-K. We have
22 over 70,000 Pre-K seats, just to have that
23 juxtaposition.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay.

2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: And I believe
3 for 3K there are about 43,000 seats or applications.
4 There's 47,000 seats. And so right now our capacity
5 throughout the--

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] System.

7 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: Exactly-- is
8 significantly less. We have about a 70 percent fill
9 rate right now.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, we have so many
11 families that-- we have to do much, much more
12 outreach then.

13 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: So, I
14 appreciate that, Chair. I think it's a multifaceted
15 approach and I think we have to really face the
16 reality that the sector is very much stressed and
17 strained for a host of reasons. And so, I do think
18 that outreach is part of the solution. I do not think
19 it's the sole solution.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Absolutely.

21 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: And so, it's
22 a matter of really moving seats closer to where the
23 demand lives and is necessary, and right now that's
24 not necessarily the case.

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: But you're not
3 filling enough seats. So, is-- where's the gap?
4 There's a huge gap here in filling seats. Let's talk
5 about it, right? So, you have this big universe and
6 about what 70,000 sets were applied for and you gave
7 them all and you still have a huge gap. So how do you
8 plan on filling in this gap if we're going to give a
9 seat? Are we missing something here in outreach? I
10 know the engagement is not the silver bullet, I get
11 that, right? But what else are we doing to fill this
12 huge gap that we have here? That's a huge gap.

13 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: I agree.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, what are we
15 going to do? I'm listening for the plan.

16 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: No. So, I
17 appreciate that. And so some of that plan requires--
18 and I'm going to actually take a step back. We are
19 restricted to operate in the bounds of an existing
20 contract.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Right.

22 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: And so
23 although we really-- we really-- we are asking for a
24 lot more flexibility and nimbleness than exists. We
25 are doing what we can within the bounds of those

2 agreements. And so where we can convert a seat maybe
3 from a Pre-K seat to a 3K seat, we are having
4 conversations with providers to do that. Where we
5 can modify an EDY seat, again, those means tested
6 seats that are based on, you know, income household
7 size, to an SDY seat which is subsidized with CTL and
8 based on age, and we have to live in the five
9 boroughs. We are doing that as well, and so where we
10 can really infuse flexibility into existing
11 contracts, we are exploring those options.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, how do the
13 number of applications this year for 3K and the
14 numbers of offers made to-date compared to last year?

15 CHIEF ENROLLMENT OFFICER KELLY: For 3K
16 it's slightly higher, and for Pre-K it's slightly
17 lower, but it's pretty flat.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: It's pretty flat.
19 So do you plan to offer a seat to every family that
20 submitted a Pre-K and 3K application?

21 CHIEF ENROLLMENT OFFICER KELLY: Yes,
22 that's correct.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: If not, will you be
24 requesting funding to be able to make an offer to
25 every applicant and how much will that cost?

2 CHIEF ENROLLMENT OFFICER KELLY: Well, we
3 did make an offer to every applicant.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah, last year we
5 had to pay for that, remember? Are we doing that
6 same model this year again, or no?

7 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: So, thanks to
8 you and the Administration as well, we were able to
9 retain that \$20 million and so the seats created with
10 the \$20 million last year went into the pool this
11 year which we used to extend offers to recent
12 applicants. So no, we are not adding any additional
13 seats.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, thank you. If
15 DOE was able to make an offer to every family, how
16 many extended day and extended year offers DOE was
17 able to provide to eligible applicants?

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: And so we
19 cannot determine or-- any perspective in eligibility
20 for EDY, so they have to undergo the application and
21 only after that process can we determine eligibility.
22 However, we can say that the 2,500 3K families
23 currently enrolled will have a seat to matriculate
24 into. There are over 5,000 Pre-K EDY seats, and as I
25 mentioned, we have some significant under-enrollment

2 and most of that is pervasive in the EDY portion of
3 our program. And so there is a lot of wiggle room to
4 accommodate families who are determined eligible for
5 EDY.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And this year you're
7 starting earlier than last year, because last year we
8 started really late in offering families, and just
9 similar to Summer Rising, we have to start earlier.

10 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: That's right.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Families make plans,
12 right? So we have to learn to plan around families
13 in taking these seats. They plan their vacation.
14 They plan their time. So we have to also be mindful
15 of that and starting earlier. In terms of Head
16 Start, I wanted to get around Head Start. In
17 addition to the Early Childhood education funding
18 added in the Executive Plan, the Administration also
19 current reapplying for Head Start funding and
20 announced that it will be aging down City Head Start
21 system as well as working to buffer any potential
22 changes in the Head Start funding. How many Head
23 Start seats for age three to four are funded in the
24 current fiscal year?

2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: So, three to
3 five-year-old seats, we have 5,750 in our current
4 grant which expires June 30th.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many of the Head
6 Start seats for age three to four did DOE apply for
7 in the new application?

8 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: A little over
9 3,000.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: 3,000. And what's
11 the-- how many early Head Start seats for age zero to
12 two are provided in the current fiscal year? Because
13 I know you wanted to age down.

14 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: Exactly. We
15 are currently funded for 136 early Head Start seats,
16 and we applied for 1,000.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Early Head Starts
18 for age zero to two, did you apply for a new
19 application for that?

20 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: We did. And
21 do your point, Chair, we did apply for additional
22 early Head Start seats.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And does the funding
24 amount that DOE applied for cover the current
25 subcontractors or you have to make up for providers?

2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: And so yeah,
3 it's a big of a Venn diagram. And so what we-- were
4 actually required to reapply, and we are also entered
5 in something called the full enrollment initiative
6 which due to persistent under-enrollment year over
7 year, we had to reconfigure our seat capacity, and so
8 we understand that there is increased need and care
9 for infants and toddlers, and that's why we took the
10 direction in which aging down increasing our early
11 Head Start seats. And so there will be providers who
12 currently offer Head Start as a delegate, because
13 there are direct-funded Head Start providers not in
14 New York City Public Schools portfolio who may
15 qualify in the new configuration, but there was an
16 investment from the administration to sustain Head
17 Start and early Head Start. So, there won't be any
18 impact to currently funded providers for the upcoming
19 year.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, what's the rate
21 for the seats, for these seats? What are the rates
22 the three--

23 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: [interposing]
24 The per-child cost?

25 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: The three to four.

2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: I will have
3 to get back to you on that, Chair. It varies. There
4 is a range and it's based on actual cost by the
5 provider, so we can provide that.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And the rate for
7 zero to two, as well. I'll need all of that.

8 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: We'll get
9 that to you as well.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much.
11 So, will DOE need to add new providers, and if s
12 what's-- how does that timeline look?

13 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: So, if we are
14 funded-- we're going to keep fingers crossed and
15 candles lit-- we will potentially need new providers
16 in communities not currently serviced under the New
17 York City Public School portfolio specifically for
18 Head Start seats. We released the Head Start RFI,
19 and so in that way we can enlist new interested
20 providers or existing providers who would like to
21 spread their care and their services to new regions
22 in the City.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And what districts
24 will be impacted by this? Do you have a list of--

2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: [interposing]
3 We can give you the zip codes. We can share those
4 afterwards.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And so what's the
6 timeline for this? When does this start with the
7 RFI? When does it end?

8 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: So, the RFI
9 was released last week and it will be open for three
10 weeks.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And what kind of
12 accommodation you making for providers that are aging
13 down? What are you doing in terms of support?

14 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: And so we
15 provide a host of support. If you are aging down or
16 sustaining care, you get the same tranche of support
17 from DECE, specifically, you know, my team of
18 inclusion specialists, leadership coaches,
19 instructional coordinators and social workers. We
20 also have operations analysts who provide support
21 specifically for the operations in the budget. So,
22 no matter what age of care you provide you have the
23 array of expertise in our division to go out and
24 provide in-person care or you can access them
25 virtually.

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, you have in the
3 Head Start, you have \$70.7 million in federal Head
4 Start funding that is at risk of being cut. What is
5 the contingency plan has DOE and the Administration
6 made to ensure that access to Head Start despite
7 uncertainty at the federal level?

8 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: So, we have
9 about \$78 million in our current Head Start grant and
10 that's inclusive of early Head Start services. And
11 so again, the administration invested funding to
12 sustain our Head Start program for the upcoming year
13 so there will be no impact to current providers.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And if you do
15 receive the full Head Start funding, right, on the
16 new application, what will be the change in capacity?
17 In terms of zero to two, what's your capacity?
18 Three-year-olds and four-year-olds, what's the
19 capacity on that?

20 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: And so it
21 would be a net add. And so right now we would
22 sustain the 136 and we'll add those 1,000 slots that
23 we apply for, again assuming we are funded in-full.
24 And in the case we get the Head Start component, to
25 your point, Chair, for three through five-year-olds--

2 to five-year-olds, excuse me-- and then we would add
3 those 3,000 seats to our current 5,000 seats with
4 some modifications. Again, we're working with all of
5 our providers, may they be delegates and providing
6 Head Start or their care, to see how we can maximize
7 enrollment and ultimately revenue at their site. In
8 the case they can make some shifts within their
9 contract, we are having those conversations in real-
10 time.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And if you don't get
12 the funding, what does that look like also in
13 capacity?

14 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: So, we would
15 sustain the capacity pretty much as it currently is.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. And when will
17 you get renewed contracts for Head Start?

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: We should
19 find out by June.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Additionally, DOE
21 has not claimed reimbursement for Head Start funding
22 at the same rate as last year. Why haven't you been
23 able to claim reimbursement for the Head Start
24 funding as quickly? Please outline any issues your
25 facing.

2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: I am not
3 aware that our claiming rate and frequency has
4 changed. And so we will get back to you on that,
5 Chair.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Please do.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Questions
8 now from Council Member Schulman followed by Brooks-
9 Powers.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Council Member
11 Schulman? Council Member Brooks--

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Powers?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: I'm right
14 here. Thank you, Chairs. Hi, Chancellor, it's so
15 wonderful to see you. And thank you for your
16 testimony. Thank you to the young people earlier for
17 their amazing testimony as well. I'm going to just
18 run through all my questions, and I'll repeat
19 whatever you want, okay? So, Community School
20 Districts 27 and 29, how many students are still
21 waiting for a seat in their legally mandated pre-
22 school special education class? What is DOE doing to
23 ensure preschool students are able to receive their
24 legally mandated preschool special education services
25 such as speech therapy and counseling? In Council

2 District 31-- excuse me-- according to research from
3 our advocate partners, 84 percent of schools are not
4 fully accessible to students, parents, educators, and
5 community members with physical disabilities. What
6 is DOE doing to address these accessibility concerns?
7 Given this year's increased funding for Early
8 Childhood education, does the Department expect to
9 provide 3K and Pre-K seats to all families in Council
10 District 31 and across southeast Queens who have
11 applied? Principals in my district have repeatedly
12 highlighted staffing issues from our local schools.
13 In this year's budget, how is the Department seeking
14 to address these staffing shortages, particularly in
15 Districts 27 and 29. And according to the IBO,
16 School District 27 saw a decrease in capacity for 3K
17 and Pre-K from 2023 to 2024 despite an increase in
18 enrollment. Similarly, School District 29 saw a
19 decrease in capacity for 3K over the same time
20 period. Can the Department explain why 3K and Pre-K
21 capacity has dropped for schools in my district and
22 how you plan to address this urgent issue in the
23 upcoming budget. And my final question is, what I'm
24 seeing in some of our private daycares that have 3K
25 and Pre-K, they have more 3K classes than Pre-K and

2 when parents and families are looking for continuity
3 to roll those kids into Pre-K, they are being forced
4 into the traditional public schools where the parents
5 are not yet ready for that. And I know my office has
6 reached out following some requests we've received to
7 get approved for additional Pre-K classes. So,
8 there's no alignment from 3K to Pre-K where there are
9 schools that have the space and capacity for it.

10 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Thank you,
11 Council Member. It's great to see you. Certainly
12 appreciate the list of questions, and we are here to
13 start responding. I think we're going to start with
14 Deputy Chancellors Hawkins and Foti, and then we'll
15 talk a little bit more about the teacher recruitment
16 efforts in your-- in one of your other questions.

17 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: So, I'm going
18 to be-- lead with transparency and vulnerability. I
19 did not capture all your questions, and so bear with
20 me.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: I will
22 repeat whatever you need me to.

23 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: Go again. I
24 also want to modify one of my responses. And so I
25 got a little excited. For our application for Head

2 Start, we actually apply for a little over 2,000
3 seats. So, I apologize for that. And so any
4 specifics around your district, Council Member, I
5 will definitely get back to you. I'll have my team
6 look into that, but one of the things you highlighted
7 around the matriculation issue from 3K to Pre-K is at
8 the core of one of the things we're trying to solve
9 for. And so-- and also, one of the reasons why
10 families have to apply year over year even if they're
11 already enrolled in a 3K seat. And so, what we want
12 to do is where space is possible and where providers,
13 CBOs or otherwise are interested in having that
14 continuity of care model at their site, we want to
15 build that in as much as possible. We're also
16 figuring out ways to make seats fungible, right?
17 Care-- demand changes year over year. We can't keep
18 adding 3K, changing the Pre-K and vice versa. So,
19 where we can have a more kind of preschool band model
20 that is something we are exploring as well, because
21 again it will give the provider and the school leader
22 the opportunity to shift as needed, and that's
23 expected by their families. Specifics on, you know
24 again, your district, I note my colleague Dan took
25 some great questions, so we'll definitely look into

2 it. We'll definitely look into that and get back to
3 you around 3K, a decrease in 3K capacity.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: That would
5 be great. And then in terms of the staffing-- and I
6 will say even though I'm speaking on my district, I'm
7 sure some of my colleagues experienced the same
8 especially when you're further out in the City there
9 is a lack of, I guess, interest in some cases to be
10 able to secure certain staff for our students,
11 unfortunately. They've done-- my educators and my
12 community are dynamic. They've done everything.
13 We've made flyers together. We've put them out.
14 They've done hiring sessions. We've done it all, but
15 it is very difficult, and so I'm not sure what-- how
16 the budget can be leveraged to assist with that, but
17 that is-- that is something I'd like to hear from the
18 Department on how you are addressing that.

19 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: And we're
20 talking about Early Childhood education teachers, or?

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: This is
22 not limited to Early Child, yeah.

23 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: Okay.

24 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Thank you. And
25 so we mentioned earlier that 3,700 teachers in order

2 to comply with class size need to be recruited. And
3 as we talk about teacher recruitment, we also need to
4 talk about teacher retention, because what we don't
5 want is to lose excellent teachers and have a
6 revolving door and every year need to recruit
7 thousands and thousands of teachers. And so we rely
8 on programs that have really successful rates
9 historically like New York City Teaching Fellows. I
10 turned out pretty okay. I was a Teaching Fellow. I
11 think I've been here for a while. Council Member
12 Dinowitz? And we also have-- we also have New York
13 City Men Teach, understanding how important it is to
14 not only recruit teachers, but recruit male teachers,
15 recruit more teachers of color and quite frankly,
16 recruit teachers who reflect the communities that
17 they serve in and teachers who are deeply invested in
18 these communities. Quite simply, Council Member, one
19 of the things that we are doing is strategizing with
20 our superintendents on a case-by-case basis.
21 Marketing and recruiting go hand in hand and so many
22 of the gems that sit in communities are not known. So
23 we are working strategically with superintendents to
24 get the word out on certain schools. We've also
25 expanded programs. Future Ready is a game-changer in

2 terms of recruiting for students, and so that's why
3 we didn't reserve amazing programs like that just for
4 your "elite areas." We wanted to make sure that some
5 of our underserved communities are really benefitting
6 from these pragmas, and we know that that is also
7 going to help with recruitment. So, in terms of the
8 specific districts that you listed, we are happy to
9 set up a briefing with you which would include the
10 superintendent, and we can talk to you specifically
11 about what's being done in those districts. But we
12 look very specifically at the communities and work
13 with the superintendents to identify the challenges
14 and then not only relying on some of these programs
15 like Teaching Fellows and New York City Men Teach and
16 university partnerships, but really try to figure out
17 what is it that we're solving for so people can
18 understand the great programs and offerings. We
19 also-- the last thing I will mention is making sure
20 that we are incentivizing for some of the teachers--
21 I'm sorry-- for some of the districts to interview
22 early on. We want to have early commitments in some
23 of our harder-to-staff districts, so that way those
24 districts can secure great teachers early on.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: And then
3 in terms of the accessibility. And I can repeat if
4 you need me to.

5 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yes.
6 So, the-- I don't have specific numbers, Council
7 Member, for your district, but you know this has been
8 ongoing effort and funding is important to this
9 effort. The capital plan we have before us now has
10 \$800 million invested in making buildings more
11 accessible. The last five-year plan had, I believe,
12 \$750 million. That has resulted in those numbers
13 inching up. So we have more buildings now that are
14 fully accessible, more buildings that are partially
15 accessible, but we need to do more. The average age
16 of our building I think is something like 60-70 years
17 old. They were not built to be accessible. The new
18 buildings certainly are, but the older ones are not,
19 and so it takes quite a bit to retrofit all of those
20 buildings. We-- and doing the accessibility program,
21 we absolutely target communities like on the
22 peninsula, Far Rockaway, etcetera, central Brooklyn
23 to make sure the accessibility is equitable, but we
24 need to do more and that frankly is going to take
25 more capital dollars to do that.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: And to
3 that point, even with the reduction of the class
4 sizes, and I know I've sent a letter on too you
5 Chancellor regarding one of our middle schools that's
6 located currently on the Far Rockaway High School
7 campus, and the lack of real estate on that campus
8 for them to be able to successfully make their
9 classrooms smaller. Is that taken into account in
10 this budget at all? And then my final, final
11 question-- and I'm turning my mic off, Chairs. Thank
12 you for your patience-- is GNT expansion. Is any plan
13 in this budget to expand and create more seats for
14 the GNT program?

15 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: So, someone
16 else will do GNT. I will say on the capital side two
17 quick things I want to share. I was trying to get
18 the data for your district and didn't. I would say as
19 the First Deputy said, we're making progress right
20 now when you look at districts the way we look at
21 community school districts, all of our districts are
22 at least 30 percent fully accessible, and our hope is
23 in the next plan they'll all get to 40 percent fully
24 accessible. Thanks to that \$800 million. And based
25 on feedback from advocates and families and

2 communities, we're prioritizing D75 as a piece of
3 that, too, and help to get our D75 program to 50
4 percent fully accessible. But as the First Deputy
5 said, more funding is needed to get beyond that. In
6 terms of class size capital funding, it is within
7 SCA's budget. There is currently over \$6 billion for
8 new capacity that is going to class size, new
9 capacity for class size because that's where we need
10 it around the City. That will fund capacity for
11 about 33,000 additional seats. About a third of
12 those are already sited, so it's public and SCA is
13 already working on that and another 7,000. The
14 communities have been selected and SCA is working on
15 identifying sites. We can definitely get you what's
16 going on there for your community in particular and
17 make sure you have the specifics, both what's sited
18 and what is not at this point. I will say to your
19 point about your school, one of the things SCA doing
20 is they plan now-- is no longer looking at just
21 communities where there's seat need, but at the
22 specific schools, because that's what the class size
23 law requires, so that shifted their planning a
24 little, and that's what they're starting to do going
25 forward.

2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: And I just
3 wanted to finish with the special education
4 questions. So, we will disaggregate the enrollment
5 data based on your district and are happy to do that
6 across the board, Council Member. I-- as I said
7 earlier, we do expect every preschooler with a
8 special-- in need of a special education seat to have
9 one in the upcoming year just as they had one this
10 school year. Just to continuously point out,
11 preschool special education when-- at its inception,
12 Pre-K for All did not consider, you know, a fully
13 structured funding system for Pre-K for All in terms
14 of special education. So this Council and this
15 administration has been making up for that, right?
16 So, you all in conjunction with this administration
17 have added over 1,700 preschool special education
18 seats since you've been here. It's pretty remarkable
19 and I want to thank you for that, and again, thank
20 you for baselining \$55 million. In terms of
21 services, any services missed by preschoolers are--
22 we're working diligently to make up for those
23 services via Weekend Academies, our Sensory Gyms, and
24 new related service contract and as well as offering
25 preschoolers related service sites for services. But

2 we will continue to press on this and are happy to
3 give you the data for your district.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Questions
5 from Council Member Louis.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Thank you, Chairs.
7 Good to see you, Chancellor, and your whole team.
8 You came ready for work. Very happy to see the Seeds
9 in the Middle students that were with us today, two
10 of them being from my district. Two quick questions
11 on class size and one on Title I. How much funding
12 is being allocated specifically to improve class size
13 compliance and the lowest need of schools where
14 compliance remains critically low at just 25 percent,
15 and how does this compare to investments made in the
16 highest needs schools where compliance has reached 62
17 percent or more? And what target steps is the DOE
18 taking to accelerate class size compliance in under-
19 resourced communities, including hiring initiatives,
20 classroom construction or expansion and
21 administrative support for scheduling, and how is
22 this being tracked and reported publicly? And my
23 last question is on Title I. Many schools in my
24 district, PS361, 326, 251, 244, 193, Andries Hudde,
25 and so many others are Title I eligible which is

2 crucial for supporting schools in low-income
3 communities. I wanted to know have there been any
4 updates or warnings from the DOE requiring cuts to
5 Title I funding or other federal education grants
6 that would affect our highest needs schools in
7 districts like mine. And I know that in your
8 testimony you mentioned that the administration put
9 some funding to baseline some of that, but I wanted
10 to know was there additional updates or warnings that
11 you all can share with us today about Title I
12 schools?

13 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Thank you so
14 much for your questions, Council Member, and I'm so
15 glad that you got to see student from your district
16 or as I like to refer to them as future Council
17 Members.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Oh, yeah.

19 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: So, we-- of
20 course, our team is here and will answers your
21 questions very specifically, but I want to start by
22 saying that one of the biggest things that I'm most
23 proud of when it comes to class size is that we
24 recognize that a top-down approach, a one-size-fits-
25 all approach, does not work when complying with such

2 an important mandate, and so that's precisely why we
3 gave schools an opportunity to submit proposals,
4 telling us what it is that they need from teachers to
5 extra administrators, to converting office space into
6 class size space, all these things that they would
7 need to do in order to comply at the school level
8 before the district steps in. and you asked some
9 very important targeted questions, and we're going to
10 pass it over to team so they can respond. Thank you.

11 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Good morning.

12 So we are happy to supply sort of all the specifics
13 on your district or others if helpful. I think what
14 you're referring to is the fact that currently our
15 class size compliance in our higher-need communities
16 by ENI is far higher than our class size compliance
17 in our lower-need communities in terms of economic
18 need, and so in District 25 and 26, it's more like 15
19 percent, and when you look in central Brooklyn it's
20 closer to 80 percent already. And as the Chancellor
21 said, we did try and create a class size proposal
22 this year that lets schools ask for what they need to
23 meet their compliance without us requiring it. We
24 did see more applications for more teachers from
25 schools in our comparatively better off communities

2 than we did from schools in our higher ENI
3 communities that sort of tracked what you'd think
4 based on compliance rates. That also means in terms
5 of the funding we are providing for new teachers, and
6 those 3,700 new teachers we're providing funding for,
7 they trend the same way. Those are tending to go
8 more to outer Queens, south Brooklyn, Staten Island
9 where schools are farther from compliance than to
10 some of those higher-need communities. So that is
11 also by the way in part because all of our other
12 funding streams really are highly equitable and do
13 target additional funding to our higher need
14 communities like fair student funding provides a lot
15 of additional funding to our higher need communities,
16 but this is flipping a little bit the other way in
17 terms of teacher hiring. We are prioritizing our
18 high-need schools where we can. The law requires
19 that. We're also working to be responsive to what
20 the law requires in terms of improving compliance.
21 I'm happy to share the specifics. Title I is the
22 other-- was the other one. Yeah, so Title I as I
23 shared earlier is the largest funding stream we
24 receive from the federal government from the U.S.
25 Department of Education. It actually goes to all of

2 our schools to support students in temporary housing,
3 and then over 80 percent to support school
4 communities in terms of the students we serve. At
5 this point we haven't seen any reductions to that,
6 but we are keeping a close eye on what's going on at
7 the federal level, because it obviously would have a
8 broad impact and we would need to work together in
9 terms of what the plan is.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Thank you so much.
11 Thank you, Chair.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yes. In your Title
13 I funding for students in temporary housing, what's
14 the funding for the McKinney-Vento per student
15 allocation? You're going to get back to me?

16 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: We can come
17 back to you on that.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: To reach the class
19 size compliance, DOE announced that funding added in
20 the executive plan would be used towards hiring 3,700
21 new teachers. Is it the Council understanding that
22 \$150 million added to the Fiscal 2026 and the \$200
23 million in the out-years is in initial funding in
24 hiring teachers for class size?

2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Yes, so as I
3 mentioned earlier, that's initial city funding. We
4 expect-- we have additional state funding, as we
5 know, \$241 million that will be in C for E [sic]. We
6 do also expect there to be some additional funding
7 needed on top of that for funding the 3,700 teachers
8 for next year that we continue to work with OMB on
9 for the Adopted Budget. So, a bit over \$400 million
10 total.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many teachers
12 have applied so far?

13 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: I don't have
14 the number of how many teachers have applied so far.
15 We can definitely look and get back to you. As you
16 know, we did intentionally announce this early to
17 give more teachers time to apply since we're getting
18 close to doubling the number of teachers we usually
19 hire. So we announced it early and we actually mass
20 posted externally all of those teaching positions--
21 not something we usually do-- to speed up the
22 external hiring process as well, last week. But we
23 can come back to you with numbers, and we know
24 they're ticking up already.

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Is there a
3 prioritizing certain license areas since we do have
4 shortages across the City in certain licensing areas?

5 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: We continue to
6 prioritize special education, our bilingual ENL
7 teachers, and that's not only specific to meeting the
8 class size mandate, but that's just historically that
9 we know we have to do a lot of extra targeted
10 recruitment around those licensing areas, and also
11 I'm sure you remember, Chair, you were very helpful
12 when we asked the state to grant that automatic
13 tenure to those teachers who already successfully
14 completed tenure in one license and held a secondary
15 license. So doing creative things like that so that
16 the excellent teachers we have in the system, we can
17 incentivize them to use other licenses. And just on
18 one more point, you know, a lot the-- so we will
19 definitely give you the number of teachers who have
20 applied thus far, but also knowing that as we end the
21 closing of the school year we're going to see those
22 numbers increase through open market in the coming
23 weeks.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yes. Open market.
25 And don't forget to recruit from the BPS pool, too,

2 Bilingual Pupil Services. That's where you'll get a
3 lot of your special education. Bilingual teachers,
4 your bilingual teachers, the ESL comes from that pool
5 so don't forget bilingual-- don't forget BPS. Thank
6 you. How many schools were not granted funding, this
7 funding for class size? Do they know how to apply?
8 And you wanted to-- you talked about the equity
9 issue. How are we reaching out to schools that have
10 not applied or underserved communities that normally
11 would not apply?

12 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Yeah, we did
13 a lot of outreach with our partners in the Division
14 of School Leadership in trainings working through our
15 budget directors and our HR folks. We developed this
16 whole program in partnership with UFT and CSA, start
17 to finish. So they did a lot of outreach as well,
18 and we did both joint training and individual
19 trainings on the program, how to apply, the timeline,
20 and give folks a couple of months to do it. We saw
21 close to 800 schools apply. We funded roughly 750 of
22 them. So we funded almost all the schools that
23 applied and that's how we got to that 3,700 teacher
24 numbers. In addition to the 3,700 teachers, schools
25 could apply for funds for other things as well, which

2 they did. Teachers are obviously the big thing here,
3 but we funded about 100 additional assistant
4 principals to help support those teachers. Schools
5 could come in and ask for room conversion to turn
6 space, as the Chancellor said, into a classroom.
7 We're funding some of those projects as well. So
8 that's overall what the pool looked like. Generally,
9 we prioritized high-need, but I would say we wanted
10 to make sure the funding was clearly going to be used
11 to improve class size compliance. We certainly got
12 some requests that were not actually related to that.
13 We wanted to make sure we understood how it would
14 improve class size compliance. We did look at ENI,
15 but as I mentioned, the applications trended the
16 other way and we did fund almost all of them at that
17 point, and so that's sort of the joint criteria we
18 looked at. We-- UFT and CSA actually all applied,
19 all reviewed all of the applications together, and so
20 the decisions reflected those joint feedback.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Able to share the
22 list of schools and how much funding the schools
23 received? And is their annual class size plan only
24 include number of teachers that school needs to hire

2 or does it include other necessary expenses to meet
3 the class size?

4 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Yes, we can
5 definitely provide you with the number of teachers
6 and funding that schools did receive, because as I
7 said, it's not just teachers, and funding was
8 available not just to hire teachers, but for things
9 like assistant principals, for things like room
10 conversions, for supporting current teachers to teach
11 additional periods, all of those were other ways. It
12 really-- we tried to reflect what we've heard over a
13 couple of years in terms of the different ways
14 schools want to meet class size within their current
15 context without cutting programming for anything
16 else. And so all of those we're funding [inaudible].

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What's the timeline
18 for the allocation for teachers to the schools?

19 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Funding
20 itself will go out with initial school budgets which,
21 you know, will be late this month as it always is,
22 but the reason we pre-announced it was so during Open
23 Market teachers could start to see what's available.
24 Principals could start to hire so that we could post
25 all those positions externally even though schools

2 don't have their budgets yet. So while budgets will
3 come out in the regular cycle, schools are able to
4 make moves before then because we announced it
5 earlier.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And those hirings
7 are also assistant principals and support staff that
8 they will need.

9 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Absolutely.
10 Any-- so I just want to double-down on a couple of
11 things. When we say a plan, the school actually
12 needed to present a holistic plan for how they were
13 going to meet the class size. So if you're hiring an
14 additional 16 teachers, you are going to need an
15 assistant principal who is going to support those
16 teachers. We want to make sure that professional
17 development is at the center of teacher support. We
18 also know that in some cases conversion, right, we
19 have some nice-- there's some nice offices that can
20 house children, like, for classrooms. And so that
21 was also part of the plan. Extend day, if we needed
22 to put on, you know ninth period or other programs,
23 we wanted to make sure that the impact was not felt
24 at the school budget level, because they needed to
25 meet this mandate. And so when we say the plan, we

2 meant a holistic plan that really, really captured
3 all of the steps that would ensure the school can
4 meet the mandate. What it was not going to do was to
5 allow a school that said wouldn't it be cool if I had
6 an extra assistant principal-- I already have four--
7 and we were not going to turn around and say here's
8 the extra money to do that. It's not a wish list if
9 it's not for you to comply with class size mandate.
10 We felt very comfortable in the decisions that we
11 made, because they were in collaboration, close
12 collaboration, with the UFT and the CSA.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: One of the concerns
14 Chair Brannan and I share is we also don't want while
15 we're doing class size to lose our drama room, our
16 theater, and our art classes. We are hearing from
17 teachers that we don't want arts on wheel. We really
18 want the kids to go in and rely experience arts in a
19 classroom.

20 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Absolutely, and
21 again, I think that's why the first step in the
22 process was to really hear directly from schools, and
23 art on a cart is an issue that has historically
24 plagued the system for a very, very long time. We
25 certainly don't want compliance with class size law

2 to add more of that, but the reality is that as First
3 Deputy Chancellor mentioned, there are issues with
4 some of our buildings, and so we are working very,
5 very closely with superintendents and SCA and all the
6 partners to make those adjustments separate and apart
7 from the class size compliance.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Just some
9 housekeeping here. We've been joined by Council
10 Members Ayala, Krishnan, Hanks, Narcisse, Gutiérrez,
11 Powers, and Stevens. And now have questions from
12 Council Member Fariás followed by Restler.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Thank you,
14 Chairs. And folks from the admin, let me know if
15 you've already answered this question around Head
16 Start. We know funding for Early Childhood education
17 programs like Head Start is crucial for our city when
18 taking into account the federal budget cuts. Head
19 Start will face financial strains if support is
20 abandoned by the federal government. Is the City DOE
21 prepared to continue providing Early Childhood
22 education services to our city's population should
23 the Trump Administration move forward with cutting
24 federal funding, and if so, can you expand a little
25 bit on the plan that the City has for DOE providing

2 Early Childhood education services with potentially
3 no funding support?

4 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: Hi, Council
5 Member. Thank you for that question. And so, yes, we
6 are planning and actually we submitted our
7 application to the office of Head Start to modify and
8 reconfigure how we support Head Start eligible
9 families across the City. And in addition to that,
10 the admin has-- they've already committed funding to
11 sustain our current Head Start sector for another
12 fiscal and program year. And so my team and I, we've
13 been engaged with those delegate providers. Again,
14 there are direct-funded Head Start. That is-- those
15 providers, although great are not under New York City
16 Public Schools, and so that investment will sustain
17 our current delegate sector, and so we've been
18 engaged in conversations with them to ensure that
19 they are aware and feel supported.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Thank you for
21 that response, and obviously I would like to say on
22 behalf of the Council if there's any ways that we can
23 continue being supportive and ensuring that that
24 stays or is expanded, please let us know.

25 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: Thank you.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Thank you. IEP
3 services are critical to help ensure student with
4 disabilities receive the necessary skills and
5 educational support they require in their
6 instruction. At the beginning of the school years,
7 my office and I often receive issues and reports of
8 IEPs not being directly addressed in terms of
9 paraprofessionals not being assigned to those
10 students who need it. What is the average time it
11 takes for a paraprofessional to be hired once the
12 demand has been recognized, and how long does it take
13 for a student to be assigned a paraprofessional on
14 average?

15 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: So, Dan will
16 address-- First Deputy Chancellor Weisberg will
17 address the first question, but on-- in response to
18 the second question, you know we ask schools to do
19 that planning as far in advance as possible. Kids
20 obviously come in on a rolling basis and we will
21 assign as needed. So we don't track the number of
22 days per say for assignment, but we do track the date
23 of assignment. And once that assignment is made, we
24 ask that our schools reach out to families to let
25 them know which paraprofessional has been assigned to

2 their child, and then those are-- those records are
3 updated in the IEP portal system.

4 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG:

5 Typically what happens, Council Member, we maintain a
6 very large pool and growing pool of substitute
7 paraprofessionals, many of which are nominated by the
8 schools themselves. They identify a potential
9 paraprofessional. That's really important because
10 those people have already gone through the
11 fingerprinting and so forth, and so they can move much
12 more quickly from the sub-para pool to be assigned.
13 If it's a brand new paraprofessional who hasn't gone
14 through the process yet, I don't have a number for
15 you, we'll get that, about how long it takes to get
16 through the process, but it does take some time,
17 because obviously we're never going to sign up, you
18 know, anybody to a child who hasn't been fully
19 vetted. But we do maintain that the sub-para pool of
20 many thousands of sub-paras, so often that's our
21 source to assign somebody.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Okay. Thank you.

23 A follow-up would be necessary.

24 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Thank
25 you.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Chair's
3 permission to run through two last questions that I
4 can [inaudible].

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yes.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Thank you so
7 much. Currently, the City DOE distributes reduced
8 ferry ride codes to families of high school students
9 to allow student to purchase discounted New York City
10 ferry tickets per my local law. However, many
11 private charter schools in the district have been
12 waiting on the digital codes to be distributed to
13 their students. Why has the City DOE not been able
14 to distribute these reduced rate digital codes to our
15 public school students and their families
16 efficiently? Can you go through the process and
17 maybe give us what the percentage is for those
18 disseminated out versus actually a follow-through and
19 implemented?

20 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: I'm so used
21 to questions on busing and ride share and omni carts.
22 I don't have the specifics right now, but take that
23 as you just raised it and we'll look into it and get
24 back to you--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: [interposing] I'd
3 love to talk offline about it. We are also looking
4 at a bill to expand this over to middle school
5 student. So, I want to check in on the system and
6 see how it's working for our high schoolers.

7 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: That's great.
8 And would appreciate that. I mean, I will say as you
9 know we work with EDC on this and we get positive
10 feedback and we certainly get requests to expand the
11 program regularly so we'd welcome that conversation
12 and we'll check in on the operational issues.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Okay, great. And
14 then just my last one is regarding public schools
15 with workforce development programs. Over the years
16 I've been a big champion on our vocational trade and
17 CTE, career and technical education, opportunities
18 and options in our schools. Just kind of want to talk
19 through what are the success rates of these programs,
20 particularly those in the Bronx and helping getting
21 students directly connected to jobs, and just
22 measuring what success rates for those schools mean
23 to, I guess, in direct correlation or to the numbers
24 of graduation rates? I know sometimes we are looking
25 at a school's success based off of graduation rates,

2 but for our CTE schools, what does that mean in terms
3 of us viewing that as also a success. And then if
4 you can briefly talk over whether or not-- like, how
5 many schools-- this is a friendly reminder we have
6 CTE, and if any of there non-CTE schools that also
7 have vocational trades or a career and technical
8 function, and what our offerings are there.

9 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Thank
10 you, Council Member Fariás. You are-- it's music to
11 our ears that you're talking about CTE and workforce
12 development, because that is certainly one of the
13 Chancellor's priorities, and so I'll try to keep my
14 answers short, but we'd love to do a briefing for you
15 specifically on that, and we can focus on the Bronx
16 in particular where we have really actually focused
17 our efforts on post-secondary success for our
18 student, but I would quickly say the success rates
19 for CTE programs which we love-- it's a-- they're a
20 huge driver of student success, but the success rates
21 and feeding kids not just to jobs, but to high-paying
22 jobs that lead to rewarding careers varies. It
23 really varies depending upon the program. That's
24 something we look at. CTE does have a positive effect
25 on both student engagement and graduation rates.

2 That's one of the reasons we are pleased to see that
3 CTE's expanding is part of our Future Ready efforts,
4 but as the Chancellor mentioned in her testimony,
5 beyond CTE which is a huge piece of the puzzle we're
6 driving towards universality, meaning that every
7 single child who goes to New York City Public School
8 is not just graduates and gets a diploma at the end
9 of high school, but has a clear career plan for
10 whenever it is they chose to enter the workforce. So,
11 the Chancellor mentioned, our students have earned in
12 career-connected learning, \$18 million in the last
13 year, because we are-- and that's not random. That's
14 because we are connecting them with specific industry
15 pathways, aligning jobs while they're in high school.
16 More and more of them are getting early college
17 credit which is a big indicator of success, 10
18 percent increase there. More and more of them are
19 getting industry certifications as part of our Future
20 Ready program. Sometimes that's in connection with
21 CTE programs, sometimes it isn't, but they're getting
22 these industry certifications that turn into once
23 they graduate high school high-paying jobs that then
24 turn into rewarding careers. So, we now have 15,000
25 students in Future Ready which in any other city

2 would be like a big headline. In New York City,
3 we're like, 15,000, but for each one of those 15,000
4 young people, if you talk to them-- I think Chair
5 Joseph you came out and saw one of our Future Ready
6 programs. Each one of those 15,000 is getting life-
7 changing experiences. So, we want to get that to
8 100,000 students in our pathway by 2030, and
9 ultimately all of our students graduating with a
10 clear plan for their career. So would love to expand
11 the conversation when you have time.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Yeah, I would
13 love to be able to talk more through what the schools
14 are currently offering, and I love to hear that
15 there's a direct connection to the workforce portion,
16 but also just their life-readiness plan of, you know
17 what they'd like to do. Yeah, I'd love to continue
18 the conversation offline. Thank you, Chairs, for the
19 additional time.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Just
21 want to add-- just want to add a quick piece to that.
22 I want us to also include our D75 students in those
23 experiences as well. As they leave our system, we
24 want them to have tools to succeed.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, questions
3 from Council Member Restler, followed by Hanif.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you very
5 much, Chairs Brannan and Joseph. Appreciate your
6 leadership and I want to just firstly thank the
7 Chancellor and your senior team for making yourselves
8 available and problem-solving with me and my team.
9 The First Deputy Chancellor and your Chief Operating
10 Officer have been engaging with us on school class
11 size concerns. Kevin and the DSF team are expert
12 problem solvers. I mean, they just 24 hours a day,
13 seven days a week do an amazing job, and I've been
14 really pleased by the appointment of Deputy
15 Chancellor Hawkins in particular, and I just have
16 felt a C change in the approach on Early Childhood
17 education and a desire to partner with communities
18 and try to make things work. That being said, and I
19 really want to thank, you know you all-- at the last--
20 - our Preliminary Budget hearing Seritta and the team
21 testified to your support for funding Early Childhood
22 education which was not in the Mayor's Preliminary
23 Budget and it was a bold thing for you all to do that
24 and to partner with the City Council in saying we
25 need this money and we need it baselined, and I

2 credit you for partnering with us to demand that
3 Early Childhood funding and for securing it. And
4 we're pleased to see it in the Mayor's Executive
5 Budget, but it's clear to me that it's still not
6 enough. You know, yesterday we got a phone call from
7 a student-- from a family in downtown Brooklyn who
8 got assigned a Pre-K seat in Bed-Stuy. Right? It's
9 a 57-minute walk from their home, and you know, with
10 51,000 applications we're down 20,000 kids from how
11 many we had in Pre-K eight years ago. It's a major
12 decline that we've experienced. And I don't know, if
13 three of 10-- have three out of ten four year olds in
14 New York City just disappeared? I mean, I don't-- I
15 mean, I think that we've seen some out-migration and
16 there have been some demographic shifts, but I am
17 really concerned about the decline and the shrink,
18 the retreat of our Pre-K system. So, like I
19 appreciate Deputy Chancellor Hawkins, you responded
20 to Chair Joseph and kind of acknowledging that there
21 are many challenges that we're facing with our Early
22 Childhood Education system right now, but I do really
23 think we need to do more on the outreach side. And
24 the second piece I just wanted to raise and then I'll
25 shut up on this is-- the First Deputy Chancellor

2 testified at our Prelim Budget hearing that your goal
3 for the kind of operational capacity of 3K and Pre-K
4 is 95 percent which just seems a little bonkers to
5 me. I don't know how we manage a system at 95 percent
6 capacity. That means that if 14 out of 15 kids are
7 in a 3K classroom, we're not at the goal for
8 capacity. There is just-- it's too tight and I think
9 impossible to achieve, and it means that families
10 lose out neighborhood by neighborhood across the
11 City. So just wanted to A, give you all a chance to
12 modify that answer if you'd like to, or dig in,
13 whichever you choose and to help us understand how do
14 we do better at expanding engagement in our Early
15 Childhood Education system.

16 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Council Member,
17 thank you so much for your partnership and for the
18 compliment. That means a lot coming from you. We
19 are also very exited about Deputy Chancellor Hawkins
20 being here.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: She's doing a
22 great job.

23 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: And before I
24 pass it over to her to talk all things Early
25 Childhood, I wanted to say that this is true for not

2 only Early Childhood, but everything else. We are
3 definitely on the right track in moving this system,
4 but we know that a lot of work needs to be done and
5 we are far from being done, right? And that's why the
6 partnership with all of you is so important because
7 you hold us accountable.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Yep.

9 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: You say great
10 job, add a team, but you got to do more, and without
11 that level of accountability and specificity it's
12 very hard for us to move our plans forward. So I do
13 want to thank you, and with that you can pass on
14 Deputy Chancellor Hawkins.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I don't know, it
16 sounds like Dan and Simone both want to jump in on
17 this one, but however you want to handle.

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: I just
19 wanted to say that your gratitude, Council Member,
20 thank you so much, and you know it is definitely
21 mutual. Thank you for your partnership. Thank you
22 for many of your partnership along the way. And so
23 just to clarify, that 95 percent number is specific
24 to Head Start, and actually-- and let me take a step
25 back. Head Start requires 97 percent.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Right.

3 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: We do look
4 at 95 percent as a metric across the entire, you know
5 funded and support system under New York City Public
6 School. In regards to really moving towards that
7 number, we're not looking at 95 percent to make
8 determinations on increasing capacity. We are
9 encouraging that so our provider base, specifically
10 our CBOs and contracted providers who are also family
11 childcare, can maximize their revenue. And so you
12 want to ensure that they have the most amount of
13 money so they can have high-quality care for their
14 families.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: And can you--
16 what is the capacity goal for 3K and Pre-K then
17 system-wide? If-- I'm referring to what was the--

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS:
19 [interposing] The capacity goal is always 100
20 percent.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: But
22 operationally it's hard to focus at 100 percent.
23 What's the operational-- I mean, you need some wiggle
24 room in a system. What are we looking at as a goal?

2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: And s I
3 would say the interest [sic] of that is iterative,
4 right? We're constantly looking at it. It's
5 definitely continuous quality improvement. We're
6 looking at number on a monthly basis because they're
7 funding monthly. And so there's enough leeway and
8 runway to make adjustments if we need to, but also
9 start to have conversations with you all to really
10 problem solve. I mean, I think many of you are aware
11 real estate is a problem here, and so we can't just
12 continue to open up new seats, but where we can
13 convert, where we can add in vacant spaces that we
14 currently have in our portfolio, we want to look at
15 those. So, this partnership is helpful. I
16 understand what you're saying about, you know having
17 some wiggle room and not get to a point where
18 families don't have an option, but because we'd have
19 year-round enrollment because we are looking at this
20 on a continuous basis. It's not a problem that I
21 think we're going to run into. I will say that.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I hear you and
23 I'm over time. I just think from an optimal
24 standpoint, we would have an enrollment capacity for
25 the system and a goal for percentage enrollment

2 within that system. And so, I do think having those
3 metrics that we're working toward and pushing on
4 outreach and pushing on engagement with our provides
5 is helpful, because you know, I hear you. It's
6 iterative, and that we're working monthly by month
7 and that you're working to make improvements and
8 fixing a system where there had been a lot of
9 different challenges, and I think you've been making
10 progress in those areas, and I appreciate your
11 partnership with myself and other colleagues to that
12 affect, but I still think North Star for holding
13 ourselves accountable and for growing the system as
14 much as we should. Having those metric goals is
15 really important. I'm over on time, so I will see if
16 there's time for more later, but I appreciate the
17 answers today, and I just appreciate your willingness
18 to work with us to try to maximize 3K capacity in
19 particular across District 33, and I appreciate the
20 Frist Deputy Chancellor an Deputy Chancellor
21 Vadehra's work with us especially on PSA and class
22 size compliance, which we're very-- we continue to be
23 very concerned about. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Questions from
25 Council Member Hanif followed by Krishnan.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you, Chairs,
3 and good afternoon, Chancellor and the DOE team. I
4 want to start with the two-care [sic] campaign. At
5 the Preliminary Budget hearing in March your
6 recognized the importance of aging down the City's
7 universal childcare system to two-year-olds and you
8 said you would love to see it happen. You mentioned
9 conversations were happening internally. Have you
10 looked into this more since then and has any progress
11 been made, and what is OMB saying? Any details
12 around cost?

13 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: And so I
14 would say, I like all and love all my littles equally
15 no matter their age, and so although we value and
16 understand there's need for two-- you know care for
17 two-year-olds and infant care, I would say we really
18 need to prioritize our focus on stabilizing the
19 existing system before adding additional care to it.
20 And so, as I mentioned before, again, recognizing
21 that that is a need we have, you know, within the
22 existing providers. We don't want to stress an
23 already strained system, and so we are working with
24 existing providers to age down where they can and
25 that includes two-year-old seats.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Got it. And
3 certainly agree that the existing system should be
4 streamlined and stabilized, but it would be brilliant
5 to add two-year-olds to our universal childcare
6 program. Have you considered the Council's proposal
7 from our budget response to provide 3,500 non-means
8 tested seats for zero to two-year-olds?

9 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: And so this
10 is something that we're definitely looking into. I do
11 remember reviewing it with my team. It is something
12 we need to continue to review more closely. So, if
13 you don't mind, Council Member, we'd love an
14 opportunity to round back to you on that one.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Wonderful. Thank
16 you. According to the DOE, 500 schools do not have
17 the space at their current enrollment to meet the
18 class sizes-- class size law required, including 15
19 schools in my district and an analysis by Class Size
20 Matters finds that these 500 schools enrolled nearly
21 half of all non-D75 students as well as at least over
22 250,000 students in poverty, 130 Hispanic students,
23 57,000 English language learners, 42,000 Black
24 students. What are the plans to provide these 500
25

2 schools with sufficient space so they're able to
3 lower class size?

4 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: So, hi,
5 thank you for the question. So, I do want to clarify
6 one thing about that list, because I actually think
7 it's really important. That is schools that can't
8 get all the way to compliance. It doesn't mean they
9 can't make progress. And so, I would say when we say
10 we've provided funding for 750 schools going into
11 next year to hire additional teachers, assistant
12 principals, do room conversions, some of those
13 schools are on that 500 schools list. So there's
14 progress they can make to lower class size within
15 their current capacity. There's some schools where
16 there is not progress they can make, but it's not the
17 full 500. So just so we're clear on that, we are
18 supporting those schools to get as far as they can
19 within their current space through our plan for next
20 year. In terms of the space they need-- touched on
21 this a little bit earlier, but SCA currently has a
22 bit over \$6 billion in their budget that's just for
23 new capacity projects around the City for the next
24 five years, so their current capital plan. About a
25 third of those seats which is about 11,000 seats have

2 already been sited, and they're off and running in
3 terms of-- they found the space and they're actually
4 building another--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: [interposing] These
6 are aware there was-- there isn't any space. Are you
7 referring to the schools that don't have space?

8 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Yes. So,
9 what SCA-- so, SCA has about \$6 billion that's just
10 for new capacity. They have other things in their
11 budget, but that's just being used for class size
12 compliance, and that funding is being prioritized for
13 schools and communities that don't have space to
14 reach class size compliance in their current
15 buildings. So that could mean a school that needs an
16 annex or something, or often in many cases it could
17 mean a new school building altogether and that's
18 where that funding is going. So, about a third of
19 those have been sited. Another 7,000--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: [interposing] Sited
21 as in they've been--

22 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: [interposing]
23 They found the place--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: [interposing] They
25 found the place, they're going to do the thing.

2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Yeah, sorry.
3 Yeah, yeah, yeah. So, about a third of those SCA
4 knows what they're doing where they're doing it, you
5 know and they're already working on it. Another 7,000
6 or so seats we've worked with SCA to identify the
7 communities with the greatest class size need that we
8 know, and they're searching for sites there, and
9 looking at what are the specific buildings that are
10 not going to be able to reach compliance. What do
11 those buildings need? Do they need an annex? Do we
12 need to be looking at a new site? What is needed in
13 that sub-district specifically to reach compliance?
14 And so that's what they are prioritizing next. The
15 only other thing I'd say is there are a few schools
16 even on that list that just need a classroom or two.
17 They don't need a whole new thing, and that is
18 something they could ask for funding for, as the
19 Chancellor said, through our planning process for
20 next year to do a room conversion and we are working
21 on some of those as well.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And what do you
23 anticipate the timeline of the 500 schools or the
24 ones that have-- are the hardest to make any progress
25 with?

2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: It will
3 depend on the specifics of where they already are in
4 the process and where they're getting to, but they
5 still have a few billion dollars left that hasn't
6 been assigned that they're looking to assign to
7 specific sites.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Understood. And
9 you know that SCA owes us a lot of projects, and I
10 hope that the class size program is something that
11 they prioritize. It's great to know about the \$6
12 billion. Want to make sure that this law is being
13 followed through equitably. I want to end by asking
14 about food education, gardening programs,
15 partnerships with local farms-- I loved that Seeds in
16 the Middle was here and hearing from young people
17 talk about healthy foods. I was at a school in my own
18 district trying pesto pasta that was made-- not made
19 with the actual ingredients but alternative
20 ingredients for a healthier meal. I'd like to know
21 like what are new initiatives, and how else are we
22 ensuring that healthy foods are what our children
23 are eating.

24 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: I thought
25 pesto pasta was a pretty healthy food, so now I'm

2 feeling bad about my own decisions. So, as you know,
3 healthy food and then food education is a part of
4 that, right? How do we make sure we're not just
5 serving healthier food and different food options,
6 but that students are aware of why and what's
7 important in their own nutritional needs has been a
8 priority for this administration. I would say one of
9 the biggest things we've done over the past few years
10 is created nutrition collaboratives at schools. So
11 we have 200 schools that receive funding in part
12 thanks to the \$20 million we received thanks to
13 Council in the past that used that funding to do food
14 education at the school level to learn more about
15 what's going on and why, and also do work in their
16 communities with partners. So that's sort of the big
17 thing we've done that we are continuing to expand
18 going forward looking ahead.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And then how does
20 this-- is this incorporated with compost programs in
21 schools? And Chairs, that's all. Thank you.

22 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Yes. So,
23 we're actually really proud at New York City Public
24 Schools that we managed to roll out last year
25 composting across all of our schools, and it's our

2 students who will hold you accountable, and if you
3 put something in the wrong place, having been
4 personally reprimanded a few times. So, we do have
5 composting across our schools. We beat the City to
6 get to citywide which we were glad about, and we as
7 you've probably seen, have Green Teams as a set of
8 schools who are standing there helping their fellow
9 students understand what goes where and why and
10 continuing to improve that going forward.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Would you
12 be able to share a list of those 500 schools and what
13 district they are that doesn't meet the need right
14 now? Just a quick follow-up, how many teachers does
15 the DOE believe the initial investment will cover for
16 your new teacher recruitment? This initial
17 investment, how much will that cover?

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: So, the-- as
19 I mentioned earlier, we don't think the full cost of
20 the teachers we need to hire for next year is yet
21 reflected in the budget. We expect that to be a bit
22 over \$400 million and we're looking for the state
23 funding and additional funding to do it.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. Thank you.
25 Chair Brannan?

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Questions from
3 Council Member Krishnan?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Good mor-- or
5 afternoon, everyone. Thanks so much for your
6 testimony. At this point, a lot of the questions I
7 had have already been asked, so I'm going to try to
8 cut it and just a couple of points I wanted to make
9 and just one question. So, I think this one may be a
10 repeat, so I apologize for that, but just wanted to
11 get a sense. You know, I think the biggest issues
12 that we're talking about and you're hearing from all
13 the questions are one, class sizes given the mandate,
14 and two, Early Childhood education and the importance
15 of it to this council to this city. So first, going
16 to class sizes. So there does-- and again, you may
17 have answered this one already, but given the
18 difference between what's in the Executive Budget for
19 next year and the out-years as opposed to what's
20 needed, what is the overall vision to spend with what
21 you've projected for lowering class size, and when
22 will you release the amount of funding per school?

23 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Sure, thank
24 you very much. So, I did touch on this a bit
25 earlier, but the Executive Budget came out before the

2 state enacted budget came out. So, we were working
3 with OMB to ensure we could reflect state funding as
4 a part of our class size planning. So, the Executive
5 Budget included a downpayment from the City of \$150
6 million. The state, we have-- from the state we have
7 an additional \$241 million in Contracts for
8 Excellence funding that we plan to use for class
9 size, and then we do expect there to be a bit of an
10 additional need after that and are working with OMB
11 on that. So, a bit over \$400 million for just
12 funding those 750 schools for next year. There's
13 separately money for teacher recruitment that is
14 reflected in the Executive Budget to put towards
15 teacher pipelines and bringing on additional
16 teachers.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: And when's that
18 funding-- when will you [inaudible] the amount of
19 funding for school?

20 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Yeah, sorry.
21 So, the funding for school will come out when initial
22 school budgets come out, so around the end of this
23 month on the regular cycle. The reason-- but we
24 intentionally pre-announced that. Every school
25 heard-- back when we announced in early April that we

2 were supporting schools to hire 3,700 additional
3 teachers, every school was told individually this is
4 how many additional teachers or in some cases
5 assistant principals you are getting. So, you should
6 start planning on that. You can look towards hiring
7 for that. You can post for those positions. All of
8 that started then. The funding will come towards the
9 end of the year.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Got it. Okay.

11 And for the schools that their applications get
12 rejected for additional funding, you'll work with
13 them going forward to restructure those applications?
14 I know in the past, Emma, both you and I worked
15 together on schools where we've had funding issues
16 and applications that were rejected and I appreciate
17 all your work on that, too. We got it to a good
18 place. So, just curious if that kind of work will be
19 happening with those schools, too?

20 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Yeah, so I
21 think as we look towards next year we'll be looking
22 at those schools as well as schools that didn't
23 choose to apply to figure out how we can support them
24 to improve compliance. The Chancellor touched on
25 this earlier, but in some cases some of those

2 applications were focused on needs that were not
3 about class size compliance, and so want to work with
4 them to ensure that's what we're funding through this
5 dedicated funding stream, for them and others.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Got it, okay.

7 And then just finally, I mean, we heard a bunch of
8 questions about this so I'm not going to repeat it,
9 but you know, I think the challenge I'm seeing in all
10 of this is we're trying to, you know, sort of play
11 whack-a-mole and figure out how this administration
12 is going to fund 3K, is going to make sure that
13 people have Early Childhood education seats, 3K seats
14 by-- in the neighborhoods they live in. but we need
15 to really be stepping back, right, and having a much
16 more comprehensive vision for not just 3K, but zero
17 to two as well, and then extending the extended day
18 pilot that we in the Council put in the budget, too,
19 right? Because I think the reaction-- and every
20 hearing every year we're negotiating this, but it's
21 just undermining the fact that we've got to do it a
22 much more affirmative way, plan out how we actually
23 achieve this [inaudible] that I know you all agree
24 with too of the importance of Early Childhood
25 education of extending, as I said before, both from

2 zero to two and also the extended day pilot. So, how
3 do you all see moving from a world of, you know,
4 reactions to managing to a world where we can more
5 affirmatively make these investments and build out a
6 larger program? And let me be clear, I know that you
7 all are deeply committed to that. I have serious
8 concern about City Hall and Mayor Adams' commitment
9 to that, because we've done this every single budget
10 now, and we're not getting the traction and support
11 that we need, but I think how do we move to a world
12 where we are putting that larger vision proactively
13 into place?

14 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: So, I really
15 appreciate that, and I appreciate your partnership
16 and for acknowledging that we do-- we can't continue
17 to do this piecemeal, and we really need to approach
18 it comprehensively. But I do think the
19 administration have demonstrated their support, and I
20 think you know, committing to Head Start for another
21 year is an example of that. We are having active
22 conversations with providers and families on how to
23 really reimagine the sector, and it has to be a
24 multifaceted approach. We need to-- if it is going
25 to be for all, we have to consider our children, our

2 special populations, right, our emergent multilingual
3 learners, you know, our special education children.
4 And so, in some instances we do need to go wider, but
5 we absolutely need to go deeper. That will, right,
6 require a financial investment, but with that-- it's
7 not just about opening new seats in classrooms and .
8 facilities and brick and mortars across the City. We
9 have to invest in the staffing pipeline. And so we
10 have to, when talking about this comprehensively,
11 it's not just about to your point the ages of the
12 seats. It's the type of seats and the people who are
13 supporting these children through their learning
14 trajectory. And so we absolutely welcome, you know,
15 your support. I will not pretend like we have the
16 answer to that very dynamic question, but we are
17 committed to figuring it out with you.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: You know, thank
19 you for that as well, and I would say, yeah, I think
20 we stand ready to help and partner in that work. I
21 just really urge, and I know all of us here have
22 mentioned it too, but really urge DOE to work with us
23 to really in the years ahead approach this in a very
24 different way, because there's no doubt that Early
25 Childhood education is so foundational as you all

2 know for our children, for the workforce, for our
3 economy, and we just have not seen the kind of
4 comprehensive program and investments that we need
5 and to address all of these issues from the ages to
6 as well as the pipeline. I mean, there are also
7 bureaucratic and immense hurdles, licensing and
8 otherwise that make this difficult, but we need a
9 much different and bolder vision for it overall.

10 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Council Member,
11 I want to thank you so much, and Simone obviously hit
12 all the points. Just in closing, we cannot reimagine
13 without the partnership of the Council. I
14 specifically want to thank you, Council Member Hanif,
15 Council Member Gutiérrez. Of course, the Chair is
16 always on the phone with us, and so the-- our abil--
17 when we come to you in transparency it's because we
18 know that you are deeply invested as well and you are
19 helping us to identify how we can reimagine this.
20 And so again, as I mentioned to Council Member
21 Restler, we are far from where we want to be, but I
22 think that shared investment and the acknowledgement
23 that there are some issues that we need to solve for,
24 and looking to all of you who know your districts so

2 well is going to be instrumental in how we move
3 forward in the coming years.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Well, we
5 appreciate your leadership very much, Chancellor, and
6 look forward to that continued work together and
7 those shared values. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Questions
9 from Council Member Gutiérrez.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you,
11 Chairs Joseph and Brannan. Good to see everyone.
12 Good afternoon. I also just want to share my
13 gratitude for especially the Early Childhood
14 education team. I know you inherited a lot, and I
15 just appreciate the responsiveness along with Chair
16 Joseph and just the constant communication there. I
17 had a couple of questions, and I will meet the time.
18 So, my first question is regarding My City. So, at a
19 couple-- at one my hearings for the Tech Committee I
20 had asked about kind of what was the feedback that
21 OTI-- I know they're responsible for the maintenance
22 of the site-- had received from families utilizing
23 the application system and they were unclear. I think
24 they essentially were like, check with DOE. So I
25 wanted to know if that is the case, and if so, if

2 there's any feedback that you can share? I know
3 we're only I think in year two, maybe. And if that's
4 not the case, Deputy Chancellor, that's cool, just
5 let me know. I just-- I want to have a direct sense
6 from the admin where feedback is living and how the
7 program is changing. My second question is-- and I
8 agree with Deputy Chancellor on stabilizing the
9 system, especially for Early Childhood education, and
10 I know that we're seeing-- we have seen reduced
11 capacity in the last couple of years, but there are
12 those districts where we're seeing really long
13 waiting lists and higher utilization rates. So,
14 curious how we're addressing the capacity problem in
15 those districts. I know you mentioned earlier,
16 Deputy Chancellor, operating under, like, an outdate
17 contract. I don't know if that's the sole reason, but
18 would really love to know. Because for me, District
19 24 which I share in Queens is obviously one of those,
20 like, one of those districts. And then lastly, I
21 wanted to ask a capital budget question. I know that
22 in my district particularly a large percentage of the
23 schools are not fully accessible. I believe it's 71
24 percent based on a report by Advocates for Children,
25 and I-- they're not present in the 2020-2024 capital

2 plan. So, I'd like to know what the Department is
3 doing I guess citywide to address that moving forward
4 in the next series of-- at least in the next five-
5 year capital plan. And I think that's my time.
6 Thank you.

7 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: On the
8 first question, Council Member, thank you. Good to
9 see you. You're talking about My City or were you
10 talking about My Schools?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: No, My City.
12 So yeah, yeah.

13 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: My
14 City. Yeah--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: [interposing] a
16 one-stop shop, and it launched with--

17 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG:
18 [interposing] Right, right. Just wanted to clarify
19 that.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: No, that's a
21 good distinction. Thank you.

22 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: I
23 don't think-- okay.

24 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: Yeah, so I
25 wasn't aware of your concerns, Council Member. So,

2 if you're comfortable, I don't mind rounding back.

3 We don't--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: [interposing]

5 No, you wouldn't be aware. I made it to OTI and they
6 were like, that's DOE. So that's why.

7 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: Yeah, I
8 appreciate--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: [interposing]
10 If you don't have it, that's col.

11 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: No, but we
12 don't mind figuring out alongside you. And so, I
13 will round back and want to respect your time. In
14 regards to capacity, you have done a wonderful job
15 educating me about kind of the dynamic nature of your
16 specific district. And so, again, multifaceted
17 approach for a very multifaceted issue, and so yes,
18 we are limited in some instances and just kind of
19 ramping up, but it's also financial. It's also space-
20 wise, right? Some spaces and some programs can't
21 expand. They don't have the physical capacity,
22 although that they have the desire to do so. And so
23 where we can modify within their seat capacity, we
24 work really closely with them and Department of
25 Health and Mental Hygiene because they are the

2 issuers of their permit, and that very much dictates
3 the contracted capacity in which we can operate
4 within. We'll work closely to see what's possible.
5 And so again, we've been having a few conversations
6 with a few of the other Council Members, and I know
7 we haven't had the opportunity to do so, but I would
8 love to sit with you and really give you a data dump
9 of all of your sites, the capacity and enrollment
10 levels, and we can see what's possible.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: And I just had
12 a question about the five-year capital plan and
13 accessibility.

14 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Yes, so we
15 touched on this a little bit earlier. So, as you
16 know, there's \$800 million in the next five-year
17 capital plan for accessibility. That is more than
18 the last plan, but not nearly enough to get all of
19 our schools to full accessibility. The First Deputy
20 mentioned this. There's some schools that are very
21 old and have a long way to go, but there's a lot of
22 schools where we think we can make progress. So, the
23 goal with the \$800 million we have is that every
24 community school district will get to 40 percent
25 fully accessible. Currently, we're a bit-- over 30

2 percent fully accessible across the City and another
3 like 35 percent partially accessible. So, 70 percent
4 one or the other across the City, 30 percent in every
5 district. The goal is to get to 40 percent. One of
6 the things we are prioritizing is our D75 programs.
7 And so the hope is in the next capital plan we'll get
8 to 50 percent for D75 programs in every district, but
9 there's absolutely more work to keep doing after
10 that, and that would take additional funding to get
11 beyond that. And if you have specific sites in your
12 district, happy to look into them.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I know the advocates
14 were calling for a billion dollars to make our school
15 accessible. With that billion dollars what would the
16 timeline look like from now? I think if I read the
17 report right, 2030 where our schools will be
18 accessible for all. am I correct?

19 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: I think we
20 went back and forth a little bit on this at the
21 capital hearing. That particular additional funding
22 would help us get more schools to fully accessible,
23 that's absolutely true. There are also some schools
24 that in their current building won't get there. That
25 particular timeline for a billion dollars to get to

2 fully accessible doesn't sound right to me, but happy
3 to come back and-- some of the estimates.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Send me some updated
5 numbers--

6 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: [interposing]
7 Yeah.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: as to what that
9 looks like and what does the landscape look like when
10 making schools accessible, because again, students
11 have to travel far to get to school when they can
12 stay in community, right? That's one of the biggest
13 things that I complain about and the advocates
14 complain about.

15 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: And it is one
16 of the-- sorry. It is one of the reasons that
17 whenever we do these improvements we do look at every
18 single community school district and all D75 programs
19 within them to make sure we're making at least
20 baseline progress all the way across the City to
21 avoid that.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. We'll
23 continue to push as the Council and advocates as
24 well. Council Member Narcisse?

2 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you,
3 Chair. Good afternoon and good afternoon, Chancellor
4 Ramos. You've been there for us in 114 [sic]. We
5 were so happy to see you with all your leadership,
6 and I thank God that you believe in the same thing
7 that I believe. Make sure that our children are
8 educated well and able to compete with the rest of
9 the world, and I want to say thank you for that. The
10 state of school infrastructure, particularly in older
11 buildings, is a concern across many districts. How
12 does the budget propose to address the longstanding
13 capital needs in school facilities, particularly in
14 the areas with aging infrastructure I know we talk
15 about the accessibility and stuff, but not the whole
16 infrastructure. How are we doing that?

17 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Council Member,
18 I just want to thank you so much, and you know, as
19 your-- one of your favorite people is coming to speak
20 to you, Kevin.

21 KEVIN MORAN: Good afternoon, I very much
22 appreciate the question. These Chairs are awesome. I
23 feel bad for you guys. I'm going to stay up here a
24 while. It's got cushion. I don't know what we got
25

2 going on back there. It's pretty hard. Yeah. On a
3 serious note--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: [interposing]
5 Excuse me.

6 KEVIN MORAN: On a serious note, we do
7 evaluate our buildings on a yearly basis. The
8 building conditions assessment survey, otherwise
9 known as the BCAS, informs our capital plan, informs
10 our investments, and that is ultimately coupled with
11 your investments. And so, to the entire Council, I
12 want to thank you for your Reso A contributions that
13 do bring real quick turnaround in terms of spaces
14 where people want to develop and enhance a physical
15 space. And so, I'd say it's a partnership in the
16 capital plan. The categories are posted online and
17 our partners at the School Construction Authority
18 work tirelessly to make sure these improvements
19 happen in a timely fashion. So if there are any
20 buildings that you're concerned about around the
21 ultimate, you know, the upkeep of the building or a
22 capital enhancement, it could be accessibility, it
23 could be a new auditorium, it could be classroom
24 conversions, those spaces we like to walk and talk
25 with you, because we can develop a plan in

2 partnership with the electeds and the School
3 Construction Authority on the enhancements that you
4 want to see. But we do do the regular, the
5 regimented assessment follow-up on deficiency and
6 repair and restoration of the physical plan.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: As we speak,
8 some schools, like they don't have AC. Some school,
9 things are breaking down. I'm doing my best. You can
10 follow my money. I love school and I put my money
11 where I can put it to make sure we have every aspect
12 of the school being addressed, but I need your help
13 to help me navigate the system, because when you go
14 into the cafeteria the kids are sweating, and the
15 classroom is sweating. It's not good. School-based
16 health centers-- school-based health centers-- oh, so
17 my time is up. Are school-based health centers
18 privately managed by DOHMH? Is there any funding for
19 school-based health centers in DOE budgets? How many
20 school-based health centers are there? How many
21 schools have access to one? How many students do
22 they serve?

23 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Yes, thank
24 you for the question. So, we work really closely
25 with DOHMH on all the direct services to students in

2 our school. We have actually a joint office. Our
3 Office of School Health actually reports to both
4 agencies. I wouldn't think that would work, but it
5 actually works incredibly well in terms of taking
6 their expertise and putting it and folding it into
7 our schools. So we work together on school-based
8 health centers, school-based mental health centers.
9 We currently have 314 schools with our school-based
10 health centers. We are continuing to expand our
11 school-based mental health centers as well. Happy to
12 talk about that, too, but we work jointly with them.
13 It's not through funding in our budget, though. A
14 lot of both of these, the funding is coming from
15 elsewhere, from the state, from Medicaid in some
16 cases as well, and that's what our providers are
17 going directly in terms of payments for the services.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: So, how the
19 Medicaid knowing what's going on in federal level in
20 the states, how you-- are you programming something?
21 Are you planning around it? Because the health have
22 to still be provided.

23 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Yes.
24 Appreciate the question very much, because we talked
25 earlier about some of the funding that comes directly

2 into our budget from the federal government, but the
3 reality is the funding that goes to our student and
4 families but doesn't necessarily show up in our
5 budget is just as critical, and the Medicaid funding
6 that's supporting the centers in our schools is a big
7 piece of that. In terms of our providers being able
8 to afford to offer those services in our schools and
9 us being able to expand them which we actually are
10 expanding those. We are keeping a close eye on the
11 budget bills at the federal level in terms of what
12 that might mean, and we're in close contact with
13 DOHMH and OMB. We're really glad we've been able to
14 expand these centers and wouldn't want to lose
15 progress on that.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Lastly, how
17 many students are being served? And I'm done. I
18 know I have a lot of questions.

19 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: You know, I
20 did hear you ask that, and for some reason I don't
21 have that one in front of me, but I'll get it and
22 share back shortly.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Alright. Thank
24 you, Chairs.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Now we
3 have questions from Steve-- Council Member Stevens.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Well, hello.
5 How's everyone doing today? Alright, well first
6 question is where do I get the comic books from? I
7 have a little library, and I would like to have these
8 in my little library so kids can have it in my
9 district. So, where do I get it from? That's a real
10 question. Okay, you? Okay. Got it. I would like
11 some copies. So, appreciate that. Super cute. My
12 first question is-- I had my hearing yesterday with
13 DYCD and the first question I-- and we know that
14 we're having this huge expansion. So, I just wanted
15 to just talk about like what's the collaboration
16 looks like with the after school expansion and DOE?
17 Obviously, this is going to be a huge overhaul.
18 We're all excited about it. I'm not excited about the
19 timing. But you know, we're going to get RFP out of
20 it, so I guess I got to deal with it. So, I just
21 wanted to just know. And really quickly, because I--
22 and we can also talk offline after as well. But just
23 wanted to know what the collaboration was like. Then
24 I have a Summer Rising question, and then I have a
25 question about the workforce.

2 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: Good afternoon.
3 I'm happy to share that we actually have an
4 outstanding collaboration with DYCD well prior into
5 this expansion. So, I personally and a team within
6 community schools meet with DYCD on a monthly basis.
7 We also put forward afterschool guidance based on a
8 City Council bill that was introduced. We also
9 collaborate around like the current district
10 partnerships. So, for the current expansion,
11 however, there are right now weekly meetings that are
12 happening,--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: [interposing]
14 Okay.

15 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: Stevens, both with
16 DOE, DYCD, City Hall and other members to ensure that
17 we're doing this well and thought out.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Absolutely,
19 because you know, this expansion is going to be
20 pretty much taking place in schools and so I just
21 wanted to make sure that everyone's on the same page
22 and we're all working together. But obviously, be in
23 touch about more details about what some of those
24 meetings are. Next question is based on Summer
25 Rising. Based on the impact analysis that was done

2 back in March that DOE did, there was an academic
3 gain of-- there were no academic gain for middle
4 school students, even for middle school participants
5 who attended Summer Rising program for 20 days or
6 more. There were no strategic, significant impact on
7 math scores. Furthermore, when compared to other
8 student in the City, middle school Summer Rising
9 participants who attended Summer Rising program for
10 20 days or more faired worse in reading scores than
11 their counterparties, and based on this analysis, are
12 you and DYCD looking to change programming models for
13 middle school students? Why or why not? And I just
14 even what to preference this a little bit more around
15 now that I have oversight over ACS and looking at the
16 numbers in the Juvenile Justice Detention Center were
17 over 300 currently of young people and mostly between
18 the ages of 14 and 16, and there's a rising number of
19 felony charges, and then we're seeing that the
20 attendance in Summer Rising also with SYEP, they're
21 doing project-based learning which a lot of them have
22 been complaining about and they get \$700 for the
23 summer. So, they're not going to SYEP. They're not
24 going to Summer Rising. I'm just trying to get a
25 better understanding as we're moving into the summer,

2 what are we doing for middle school? I know this
3 Council spends a lot of time talking about 3K and
4 Pre-K, but no one is talking about this population of
5 students who are going into the juvenile justice
6 system and really thinking about how are we targeting
7 and going after them in a real way? And again,
8 Summer Rising, SYEP and all these things, we are
9 failing this population of kids. So, I'm just
10 wanting to hear how are we changing this program to
11 fit what they want and not what we think they need?

12 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Thank you for
13 the question and appreciate the focus on older
14 student for sure. So, I just want to say a few
15 things. The Summer Rising impact analysis, and just
16 to be clear that was like a really pretty rigorous
17 analysis, higher bar than we usually do for our
18 programs.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: But we should
20 doing it for all the programs. So, thank you.

21 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: We should,
22 but it's one of the things that's actually hard to do
23 in many cases, because we don't have like students
24 who didn't get the exact same intervention, and so
25 we're actually able to do that and the statistically

2 significant impact we saw for many of our students,
3 for our most vulnerable students, for our younger
4 students, for our students in math is really very
5 meaningful including compared to programs like across
6 the country when those are evaluated. Always more
7 work to do and always appreciate your feedback and
8 pushes here. But we are quite proud of the work that
9 was done between our team and our, of course, our CBO
10 partners in that work. As we look towards this
11 summer and how we can continue to improve that work,
12 I'd say there's a couple of different things we're
13 doing. One is we're working closely with our
14 instructional colleagues to make sure we're
15 supporting both our teachers and our CBO providers to
16 continue to support the academic programming in the
17 morning. It's all a joint effort. B is we're working
18 again across our school communities and our
19 community-- our CBO providers to think about where we
20 can interweave additional enrichment opportunities.
21 We'll have a little bit of a climate action situation
22 throughout the school day as well as in the
23 afternoon, increase our field trips as well, and then
24 continuing to ensure the academic work is aligned
25 with the school year academic work we are doing. I

2 think those are the major quick hits in terms of
3 that. I know the Chancellor wanted to touch briefly
4 on some of the other middle school facing academic
5 work we're doing as well.

6 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Council Member,
7 just really quickly, first, and thank you for talking
8 about older student especially because my background
9 is with adolescents and I don't think we talk enough
10 about them internally. So, the first thing is that
11 the impact that we saw in the earlier grades is
12 because in that half-day academic component, we did
13 have a science-- honor [sic], right, the Science of
14 Reading training. It wasn't the same curricula that
15 we are using in other-- in our schools during the
16 regular months, but there is the-- there was work
17 around the Science of Reading. That didn't exist in
18 the middle school piece, because we hadn't expanded
19 New York City Reads into middle school which is
20 something that we recently did and we're really
21 excited--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: [interposing] I
23 told you I don't know. This is not even a hit at you
24 guys and being like I want you guys to do more--

2 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: [interposing]

3 No, no, we understand.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: academics. I
5 actually want to kind of move a little bit away from
6 it, because this is why the middle school kids are
7 not coming, right? Because like, I don't think that
8 anything's wrong with them not like doing rigorous,
9 you know, calculus and all this stuff. I think that
10 that's part of it, and so how are we getting them in
11 there? I think, you know, the data is the data and I
12 think that we need to use it to refresh it, but I
13 don't want us to get stuck there because we-- now
14 that I have this-- juvenile detentions are filling
15 up. They're filling up and the academics isn't why
16 they're filling up. So, I think this is why we need
17 to be thinking about what is it that they need and
18 how do we get all-- and have different options for
19 all the kids? And so that's why I'm asking are we
20 thinking about doing something different, because I
21 think even in this work we work in silos, right? So,
22 you know, with those kids over here in juvenile
23 detention, we have the kids over here who are going
24 to the afterschool programs, we have these kids. And
25 so I'm just trying to close some of the gaps of

2 thinking about what are we doing to make sure that
3 all these kids have options, and Summer Rising isn't
4 necessarily a good option for a lot of our middle
5 school kids because they're not coming because of the
6 academic fees [sic].

7 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: So, Council
8 Member, a couple things. One is-- and I hear what
9 you're saying. We need to make it more engaging and
10 incentivize it for the kids to come, but
11 respectfully, I do think that the academic piece is
12 also important, because what kids don't like is
13 coming to school and having their time wasted. And
14 so, if there is a de-centralized instructional
15 approach to meeting the needs of kids, then they
16 probably will not want to come. That's not to say
17 that children are jumping, you know, with excitement
18 to do any type of academic work over the summer, but
19 I do believe and I've seen it happen, that when there
20 is engaging curriculum that we're engaging
21 instructional expectations that are meeting the needs
22 of kids, they do attend.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Agree, and we're
24 on the same page. We're 100 percent. Because for
25 me, at the end of the day, as adults our job is to

2 pull education and academics out of all the
3 experience that young people have. So, anything that
4 they're doing, we can pull the academics out, but for
5 me, we also got to get them there. So, that's my
6 thing on how we get-- what's the carrot. Because
7 when they get in the building, we're going to teach
8 them. Like, that's just-- that's what we do. And so
9 that's probably what I want to-- to focus more.
10 What's the carrot to get them there? Because what
11 we're offering isn't getting them there.

12 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: So, as we also-
13 - as Flavia also mentioned earlier, we have an
14 excellent partnership with DYCD, Commissioner Howard
15 and I had a conversation about making sure that SYEP
16 opportunities are connected to our Future Ready, our
17 larger pathways work. So that way, if you are doing
18 some sort of a job in healthcare and now you are in
19 an SYEP job, there is a potential for you to be in a
20 job that is in the same industry. So, Commissioner
21 Howard and I had those conversations very early on
22 about--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: [interposing]
24 Well, I've been having that conversation with him
25 since I got here, so I feel like a lot of that is

2 wasted, too. And I'm happy you even brought that up,
3 because that's my last question, and Chairs, I'll be
4 done. Just around-- my other big push is reimagining
5 the workforce, because again young people everywhere
6 I go they're like, "Ms., I need a job. I want a job.
7 How do I get a job?" And I think that we have a lot
8 of bones here around how we can get every child in
9 the City a job if we just figure this out, right? I
10 know we have LTW which I'm a huge champion of.
11 Worked in that program, seen how it works, understand
12 it. Actually, was an LTW coordinator at YEBC [sic].
13 Loved the program. And then Future Ready which my
14 nephew literally went through, currently works at
15 Mastercard because of this program, and actually
16 works with you guys all the time around this. And
17 you know, thinking about if we have those in schools
18 and then we're looking at expanding Work, Learn, Grow
19 we can get young people jobs now. And not talking
20 about-- obviously, we want career pathways. But
21 we're talking about getting them real money now. So,
22 I would love for you guys to talk a little bit about
23 what does that work look like of getting young people
24 paid internships? What do you need from us, and how
25 do we continue to get you money to support it?

2 Because again, we focus a lot on Pre-K in here, but
3 we are not talking about how we're losing these kids,
4 and I would love to hear about like what are some of
5 the other internship opportunities, whether it's
6 through community schools and things like that so we
7 can get real money into these young people's hands
8 now.

9 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: And so First
10 Deputy Chancellor touched on this earlier so I'm
11 going to pass the mic to him to go into the details
12 again, but I just want to open with \$18 million.
13 This administration put \$18 million in the pockets of
14 students who are currently in New York City Public
15 Schools through our workforce development, and that
16 is something that we are extremely proud of. I think
17 Dan mentioned earlier that while the numbers would be
18 impressive, 15,000 kids in other districts, New York
19 City we know that we need to do a lot more which is
20 why we're always looking to expand, but we agree with
21 you and we want to make sure that students are
22 getting paid and that they do not have to negotiate
23 between basic needs and finding a job and pursuing
24 their career interest, and that is precisely why the

2 work that we do in Future Ready is so important. But
3 First Deputy Chancellor?

4 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Thank
5 you, Chancellor. And Council Member Stevens, I'm so
6 happy to hear that your nephew went through Future
7 Ready and is working at Mastercard. That's-- you
8 know, that's what we want for all--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: [interposing]
10 He's a sophomore at Baruch and he's working at
11 Mastercard.

12 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Oh, my
13 gosh.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: And he worked
15 there-- he was at Mastercard since his sophomore
16 year.

17 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG:
18 Sophomore year? That is amazing, and that's why when
19 I mentioned earlier for each of these 15,000 young
20 people who have gone through this program, it's
21 lifechanging for them because they get these
22 experiences, and as you know, from your nephew it's
23 not going and doing busy work at these companies.
24 It's not doing filing. They're getting skills that
25 transfer to full time jobs when they decide to do it

2 that then lead to rewarding careers, making six
3 figures living here in New York City. So that's the
4 vision. The-- appreciate so much you're offered to
5 help. We're trying to scale this program 15,000 to
6 100,000 quickly, quickly. We're not talking about
7 when I'm in a rocking chair on a porch somewhere.
8 We're talking about by 2030. That's coming up, so
9 we're going to need your help.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: So, what's your
11 ask this year?

12 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Our
13 ask?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Yeah, you said
15 100,000, that's what you said?

16 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: No.
17 this year, we're going to expand the number of Future
18 Ready schools from 135. We're hoping to get at least
19 185. That will touch thousands more children, but we
20 can meet with you and show you the sequence we have
21 to get it to 2030 to 100,000 students getting the
22 same sorts of experiences that your nephew got. What
23 does that take? Recruiting more employers, you can
24 help us with that. It takes funding to make sure
25 we're training the teachers and hiring the right

2 teachers to help them. It takes funding for early
3 college because as you say, Council Member, it isn't
4 just the work experience or just the academics, it's
5 both. So early college is a piece of it as well. So
6 it will take funding which right now we don't have
7 baselined in our budget. Would love your support for
8 that, also.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: How much funding
10 are you requesting currently?

11 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Well,
12 I think right now for Future Ready we're looking at
13 for next fiscal year \$29 million for the additional
14 50 schools, and then beyond that I'm sure we have
15 those figures.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: How much are
17 requested for LTW?

18 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: LTW, I
19 don't have that figure in front of me.

20 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER SCOTT: I have--

21 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: [interposing] I
22 just like to say it on the record, because I like
23 people to know how much money we need to get for the
24 things that we need to really be investing in,
25 because I think sometimes we don't look at these

2 programs of like crime reduction and public safety
3 when they really are, and this is important to me.

4 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER SCOTT: The
5 number for LTW is \$31 million.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: So, we looking
7 for like, what, \$60 million a year? I mean, that's
8 not a lot, \$60 million. We got this Council, right?
9 \$60 million that's all we asking for. It's our
10 money. So, thank you. I mean, again, these things
11 are really important to me, because again, looking at
12 how our numbers are rising in juvenile detention
13 numbers, and this is an investment, and I say this
14 regularly. If we invest in our kids on the front
15 end, we won't have to invest in them on the back end.
16 And \$60 million is a lot less than what we would have
17 to pay when they're in Rikers or when they are, you
18 know, not able to get jobs because of other things
19 and mistakes, and so for me this is an investment.
20 So, \$60 million is not a lot of money to make sure
21 that we're supporting our young people because it's
22 necessary and needed. I mean, I know a lot of folks
23 heard we had a shooting where a 16-year-old was
24 killed last week. Like, these are the things that we
25 have to make sure that we're investing in so these

2 things aren't happening. So, I will continue to
3 fight for this, and \$60 million is the number you're
4 asking, I'm going to put it on my list. So, thank
5 you.

6 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Thank
7 you.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Council
9 Member Stevens. I wanted to circle back to some of
10 the state funding questions. Just plainly, what's the
11 difference between the amount of state funding from
12 last year compared to this year?

13 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: So, for
14 foundation aid we'll receive \$539 million more, but
15 again, that's over \$300 less than we would have
16 received had the state just stuck with its current
17 formula, right? So, one way of saying is that's
18 money-- that additional \$800+ million is money we
19 earned through increase enrollment, through serving
20 our English language learners, through the cost of
21 inflation which is baked into the formula. That's
22 what we should have received under the previous
23 formula, and what we received was \$539 million.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And another
25 question about the ACS vouchers. So, if the funding

2 for the ACS vouchers for 20,000 extended-day year
3 seats are not there, then will those seats not exist
4 next year?

5 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: And so I was
6 able to confirm that number, so thank you, Chair.
7 And so ACS shared that the 20,000 is specifically for
8 the HRA cash assistance vouchers, and then there's
9 another 68,000 for ACS low-income vouchers. Specific
10 questions about the voucher program, we would have to
11 refer them back to ACS, and so we'll take a log of
12 your questions and round back to ACS and then to you.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, yeah, that's
14 very important.

15 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: Chair
16 Brannan?

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: 20,000 seats that
18 hang in the balance, we need to know.

19 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: Sorry, Chair
20 Brannan, and actually-- I don't want to misspeak, but
21 my understanding of vouchers I actually think the HRA
22 cash assistance vouchers might not be at risk. I
23 think those are-- yeah.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah, there's
25 three, yeah, yeah, yeah. They told us yesterday.

2 Okay. Okay, I want to jump over to arts education
3 funding, something that's very important to me
4 personally and to this council and to Chair Joseph.
5 The Council called on the administration to restore
6 and baseline \$41 million for arts programming in
7 schools and we were pleased to see that the funding
8 was baselined. However, 290 schools still do not
9 have a certified arts teacher and that continues to
10 be a Council priority. So, our understanding is that
11 \$11.5 million of the \$41 million was directly
12 distributed to schools through SAM36 [sic] for FY25.
13 Could you tell us how is the remainder of the \$41
14 million in arts funding dispersed?

15 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: Good
16 afternoon.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: How are you?

18 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: Live mic.
19 My name is Paul Thompson. I'm the Executive Director
20 of the Arts Office, and I just want to first say
21 thank you for your support. This is a great day for
22 the arts that arts funding is going to be baselined.
23 So, thank you. There's a number of ways that we
24 could talk about this data for you. What we provided
25 was disaggregated data. There were 44 touch-points

2 that the Arts Office was responsible for developing
3 that touched all +1,500 schools, and so I can talk
4 about sort of the high level, or I can actually go
5 through each district and talk about how many DBN's
6 [sic] per city council district were affected.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah, I think just-
8 -

9 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON:
10 [interposing] Got you. High level.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah, just the
12 process behind how that other \$41 million was spent.

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: So, the
14 Arts Office is dedicated to making sure that we are
15 supporting all schools in New York City, especially
16 those that aren't audition and/or screened. And so
17 one of the high-level things is we provided Adobe
18 licenses to every single DBN. So, every student will
19 have access to high-quality digital arts materials.
20 For arts partnership grants there were +300 schools
21 that were supported with this. For principal fellows
22 there were 170 different DBNs that were supported
23 with this funding. We did principal fellow upgrades.
24 So, there were upwards of 144 schools where principal
25 fellows were able to receive facility upgrades. So,

2 new paint, new furniture, new arts materials to help
3 support the programming that they were putting
4 together. We have Salute to Music. These are
5 borough-wide music programs. There's 160 DBNs that
6 were covered in that. There are the borough arts
7 festivals. And so just to go through those, you
8 know, there are hundreds of schools in each district
9 or in each borough that are represented in those
10 programs. For our teacher professional development
11 we have visual arts; 1,200 teachers saw support from
12 that funding, 170 theater teachers, 351 dance
13 teachers, 583 music teachers; 397 teachers were
14 supported in arts for diverse learners and NML
15 support. So again, this is just a high-level look at
16 how some of that funding was spent.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: How can DOE better
18 hold principals accountable for being in compliance
19 for arts education?

20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: That's a
21 good question. Our office early on developed a
22 strategy for supporting principals, specifically
23 since principals really are the folks responsible for
24 controlling budgets, hiring teachers, and so we
25 developed the Principals Fellows program where we

2 partnered direct with teachers to ensure-- I'm sorry--
3 - with principals to ensure that they're putting the
4 arts in the core of their school's instructional
5 mission. We also continue to work with all of the
6 superintendents who ensure that all of the principals
7 are meeting the state mandates that are set for the
8 arts. So that's in elementary school, meeting those
9 mandates, in middle school meeting those mandates and
10 in high school in meeting those mandates.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, thank you
12 very much.

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: Thank you.

14 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Chair,
15 if I could note for the record, that might be the
16 first time in Council history we've had professional
17 musicians on both the asking and the receiving of
18 questions.

19 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: We're on the same
20 channel.

21 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: It's
22 pretty cool, I just want to say, as a non-musician.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Last from me, and
24 then I'm going to kick it back to Chair Joseph. So,
25 I want to talk about the Nest and Horizon programs.

2 So, DOE recently expanded the number of specialized
3 programs for children with autism in three school
4 districts. At prior hearings, DOE has testified to
5 the very positive outcomes for students enrolled in
6 these programs. Nest and Horizon are two programs
7 that I'm a huge fan of and I think we need to do more
8 of. They have a 97 percent four-year graduation
9 rate, higher than the general education graduation
10 rate. So, what is the current capacity of Nest,
11 Horizon, and the Aims [sic] programs?

12 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: Thank you,
13 Chair. So, our current capacity in the upcoming year
14 we're going to be opening 16 new classes, and in
15 total we're going to be serving 116 more student in
16 our specialized autism programs. Overall, we're
17 projecting to serve almost 5,100 students in
18 specialized autism programs. We appreciate the
19 support of these programs and yes, are excited to
20 keep that number moving towards 100 percent.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Did New York City
22 Public Schools submit a new needs request for the
23 expansion to OMB?

24 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: Well,
25 thankfully, we worked-- we did some cost analysis and

2 are able to work out the funding this year
3 internally. We want to continue to grow these
4 programs, as you know, and we want to get to these
5 parents that are on waiting lists. This is-- these
6 are highly sought after programs.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Funding was added
8 for IESP support for students in non-public schools
9 in the Executive Plan, but I didn't see any funding
10 added in these programs for public school students.

11 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: Yes, so the
12 funding was added. I think, you know-- I'm going to
13 let my colleague answer your question, Chair, but
14 just if I may say, you know, IESP is an important
15 example of how a short term investment is going to
16 have long-term year-over-year outcomes that reap
17 benefit for public school students, and so the invest
18 currently is going to be in, you know, direct service
19 of students in private and parochial settings, and
20 we're seeing a 30 percent decrease in our due process
21 complaints which is going to serve us over time. But
22 I'll pass it to my colleague.

23 GENERAL COUNSEL VLADECK: Thank you.
24 Good afternoon, Chair. General Counsel Liz Vladeck.
25 Credit really goes to Deputy Chancellor Foti. We've

2 spoken many times before about the really explosive
3 increase in due process cases that have been filed
4 over the last eight years and how we've realized that
5 those are not primarily Carter cases, but rather
6 families who do not seek a public education and want
7 their children to go to a particular private school
8 and have DOE pay for the services. The decrease in
9 the due process cases that we saw this year, 30
10 percent down so far. And context, that's after
11 they've gone up 23 to 25 percent year-over-year. So
12 a dramatic drop-- is directly related to the ability
13 of our committees on special education doing very
14 aggressive and engaged outreach to families whose
15 students have IESPs to do more to arrange services
16 directly so that families are not put in a position
17 of having to find their own provider or file a due
18 process claim. There-- we-- the investments that
19 you're mentioning have done several things. One of
20 them was to increase the hourly rate for sets [sic]
21 services which we see at a very, very high rate in
22 IESP cases, but I would like to mention that in
23 parallel to that on the public school side, Deputy
24 Chancellor Foti's office has an RFP out to increase
25 hourly rates for related services across the board,

2 the primarily beneficiaries of which, of course, are
3 our public school students.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Thank you.
5 Chair Joseph?

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Just want to do a
7 quick follow-up on your Carter cases. We will
8 continue to call them that. In the Executive Plan,
9 \$206 million was added to the Carter case budget,
10 bringing it to Fiscal 2025 to \$1.3 billion. So Fiscal
11 2025, you've already exceeded the \$1.2 billion of
12 actual spending in FY24. Does DOE anticipate on
13 adding additional funding for Carter cases in this
14 fiscal year?

15 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER SCOTT: Yeah, I
16 can answer that one. So, it's something that we
17 definitely closely monitor. As you can see, there
18 are a number of adjustments made between Prelim and
19 Exec, and if there's any further adjustments that we
20 need to the budget, we'll definitely continue to have
21 our conversations with OMB around it.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And what are your
23 strategies for you in effort to curb the spending
24 while we're still ensuring that every student has
25 access to a free and appropriate public education?

2 And that's something I've been yelling since I've
3 been in the Council about that cost.

4 GENERAL COUNSEL VLADECK: Yes, Chair,
5 well I think you've heard from Deputy Chancellor Foti
6 about her autism programs. When we talk about the
7 cost, the dollar figures that you're pointing to, one
8 of the culprits is that explosion in the IESP cases,
9 but another culprit is the increasing cost per
10 student for a Carter case. In other words, the cost
11 of tuition--

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] So,
13 what does that average cost look like? Give me a
14 number.

15 GENERAL COUNSEL VLADECK: We're working
16 that out, because as you know, the numbers roll in
17 overtime. However, I feel comfortable ball-parking
18 tuition at a standard private school autism program
19 at around \$150,000 per student.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Per year as well?

21 GENERAL COUNSEL VLADECK: Per year, yes.
22 And so the more we are able to invest in our public
23 school autism programs, the more of those Carter
24 cases we can successfully defend. Which is to say
25 get up in a hearing and say we have offered a more

2 than adequate placement and should not be required to
3 pay that tuition.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And we're looking at
5 the model, right, the Nest program as the graduation
6 rate is so high. We need to duplicate more of that,
7 so that should go hand-in-hand with reducing our
8 costs, correct?

9 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: Thank you,
10 Chair. Exactly. You know, and I brought those
11 numbers with me. The Carter tuition cases per pupil
12 range from \$175 to \$210,000. Our specialized
13 programs, particularly our AIMS program, which is our
14 most competitive program to our Carter cases, is
15 \$66,000. So, just want to reiterate my point earlier.
16 When we can do-- if we can do a short-term investment
17 in creatin these specialized programs, that will be
18 our biggest competitor to Carter cases. Parents want
19 these programs. We had 2,200 families apply to AIMS
20 that did-- that were vying for 288 seats. If we can
21 begin a concerted effort to create these programs,
22 parents will come, and we will see those numbers
23 decrease the same way as when we built IESP services
24 in-house. We see a 33 percent decrease in due
25 process complaints.

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Earlier you
3 mentioned there were parents on wait lists. How many
4 parents do you have wait listed?

5 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: For the AIMS
6 program in K-2 there were 2,673 applicants. Now, I
7 just to be clear, that does not mean that those kids
8 are waiting for seats. Every child has a seat. That
9 is a number that is indicative of interest.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, I understand
11 that the Carter cases, the cost is varies year per
12 year, right? The council has continued for the
13 administration to line Carter case budget with actual
14 spending. So, at the Fiscal 2025 budget for due
15 process cases was \$646 million. As I mentioned
16 earlier, this was grown to \$1.3 billion in the
17 current plan. So, the Fiscal 2026 budget is
18 currently \$934 million which is well above the 2025
19 Adopted Budget amount, and well below the current
20 Fiscal 2025. So, do you believe that the current
21 Fiscal 2026 budget is more realistic in estimating
22 cost and spending in previous fiscal years at
23 adoption?

24 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER SCOTT: I can
25 answer that one for you. So, we again, continue to

2 monitor especially because a lot of our calls come
3 from prior years, and so we will work with OMB to
4 true up as we-- as the bills are coming in, but I
5 can't say right now that it is-- that it's enough,
6 indicative of the drop that we've been seeing just
7 yet.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, you know what I
9 would love? I would love to see a breakdown of
10 students receiving tuition for the year 2022, 2023--
11 2022 to 2023 school year, 2023 to 2024 school year,
12 and the current school year by race, socioeconomic
13 status, age, gender, school district, and council
14 district. So, if you don't have that, I would love
15 for you to email that to my office.

16 GENERAL COUNSEL VLADECK: Chair, I
17 believe that we have sent disaggregated data. I
18 don't-- responsive to those points. I want to say a
19 couple of quick things. One is that we are not able
20 to give a socioeconomic status breakdown because we
21 don't have income data from families. So our best
22 proxy is zip codes, and obviously--

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] Zip
24 codes, okay.

2 GENERAL COUNSEL VLADECK: that doesn't
3 really tell us because we have plenty of brownstones
4 and public housing next door to one another.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Correct.

6 GENERAL COUNSEL VLADECK: I would also
7 like to speak to projections. You know, I think when
8 we look at cost rising over these past years, it's
9 been really out of control and unpredictable, and I
10 think we have finally started to get our arms around
11 some of it in any number of ways. You know, the cost
12 of an IESP case in eight years went up by 30 times.
13 And we have undertaken many steps to deal with that,
14 including to push out some of the fraud that we know
15 is responsible for some of that increase. So, CFO
16 Seritta Scott is of course completely right, but I am
17 hopefully that we're finally bending the curve here
18 and finally getting to a place where we can start to
19 model what's happening in this space.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah, we would love
21 to see that as well. So, is it possible you could
22 provide number of students receiving direct services
23 through due process including vouchers for the last
24 10 years? Can you provide that to us?

2 GENERAL COUNSEL VLADECK: So, we don't
3 have for the last 10 years. We can talk about our
4 data systems and their updates and challenges.
5 However, I can tell you-- I can give you those
6 numbers for the last three years, and I just-- I'll
7 break it down by services and tuition, but I just
8 want to note that some students receive both and so
9 it's not additive, if that makes sense. In school
10 year 22-23, 14,521 students received direct services,
11 6,739 students we made tuition payments for. In
12 school year 23-24, 9,820 students received direct
13 services. This is all via due process cases. While
14 6,501 students we paid tuition for them. Here are
15 this year's numbers which of course are going to
16 continue to go up. The year's not over. But I do
17 think that this trend will hold on the services side.
18 We're down to 2,503 students this year receiving
19 services via due process claims, and 3,859 students
20 receiving tuition payments via Carter case.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And students who are
22 getting Carter cases, if they don't receive the
23 service in due time is it allowed to roll over for
24 the next school year? How does that work?

2 GENERAL COUNSEL VLADECK: It depends on
3 exactly what's on the IEP. So, where a family is
4 arguing-- is stating that they were entitled to
5 services that the kid didn't get and still needs, we
6 will provide compensatory services, but of course, we
7 have to evaluate kids every year. We have to monitor
8 their process and update their IEP. So, at any given
9 moment in time the IEP should reflect what that
10 student needs during that academic year.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What's the average
12 wait time when a parent wants that service, has not
13 received it and would like that service to roll over,
14 what does that look like?

15 GENERAL COUNSEL VLADECK: In the Carter
16 case setting?

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah, or Connor.

18 GENERAL COUNSEL VLADECK: So, not in our
19 public schools, but in the due process space?

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yep.

21 GENERAL COUNSEL VLADECK: Let me get back
22 to you on that.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, thank you.

24 GENERAL COUNSEL VLADECK: But I-- I'm
25 sorry, if I could just add.

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Sure.

3 GENERAL COUNSEL VLADECK: I'm sure that
4 many of the members are familiar with a longstanding
5 problem we had about getting payments for services,
6 and--

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing]
8 Correct.

9 GENERAL COUNSEL VLADECK: service
10 arrangements out the door. So we'd really love the
11 chance to brief the Council and your staff about the
12 tremendous progress we've made on that front where
13 our production, our working through of these-- of
14 service authorization and payments were reaching
15 record highs. We have a set of new tools that we're
16 hearing rave reviews about to help families and their
17 attorneys. So, to the extent that's part of your
18 question, we are making tremendous progress and would
19 love to share more.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Well, thank you. We
21 want to make sure our kids are getting the services.
22 But in the Council Preliminary Budget hearing in
23 March, New York City Public Schools testified that
24 more than 600 children were waiting for seats in
25 their legally-mandated preschool special education

2 classes, and 7,914 preschoolers with IEPs were
3 waiting for at least one of their legally-mandated
4 service to begin, and more than half of those
5 children which is 4,570 preschoolers with IEPs were
6 receiving none of their mandated service. Can you
7 give us some updated data about the number of
8 preschoolers with IEP currently waiting for seats in
9 their legally mandated preschool special education
10 classes, the number of percentage of preschoolers
11 with IEP currently waiting for at least one service
12 to start, and the number of percentage of
13 preschoolers with IEPs currently receiving none of
14 their mandated services?

15 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: Yes, I can,
16 Chair. And just want to reiterate what I said
17 earlier, we are doing everything we can with what we
18 have, right? We're making up for an infrastructure
19 that wasn't there. Currently, there's 616
20 preschoolers waiting for seats. Just to be clear, we
21 did stand up and meet every one of the, you know,
22 commitment we made with that \$55 million. We added
23 those 700 seats as promised. As I said earlier,
24 preschool special education enrollment is happening
25 on a rolling basis. It is not that, you know, those

2 kids are waiting and nothing is happening. The
3 process will continue for them. Again, we added 1,700
4 seats this administration has had. We do expect
5 through right-sizing that we will-- every kid will
6 start with a seat in the fall, and we're really
7 excited about that. In terms of students with--
8 receiving all of their related services, there are
9 currently 17,453 students in preschool receiving all,
10 that's 71 percent; 7,156, that's 29 percent, are
11 missing one or more; 3,729, that's 15 percent, have
12 no related service. We are maximizing again the
13 service providers we have. How are we doing that?
14 We're inviting kids to weekend academy. We're
15 inviting them to our 79 sensory gyms. We-- General
16 Counsel Vladeck spoke about the RFP and the
17 increased-- the enhanced related service contract.
18 That contract is especially targeting our
19 preschoolers, and of course we're going to offer our
20 preschoolers with disabilities those related service
21 summer sites, as well. You know, when we have
22 related service providers to serve our integrated
23 classrooms as well as our students in our community-
24 based programs that will really help put a dent in

2 the students that are receiving none or one-- one or
3 more services.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you for that
5 update. In our budget response we were calling for
6 \$70 million for related services, but in our January
7 and March-- New York City Public School testified
8 that you would need an additional 246 related service
9 providers to serve children in public schools, but we
10 noticed that New York City-- it's not in the budget.
11 So how will New York City meet its legal obligation
12 to these preschoolers with disabilities when the
13 funding is not in the budget?

14 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: Yeah, we were
15 calling for that as well, and we appreciate your
16 partnership on that front. As I said, we're going to
17 maximize the resources we have on those four fronts:
18 weekend, sensory gyms, the contract, related service
19 sites over the summer. We too want to see those
20 related service providers in our schools.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many providers
22 would be needed to meet those needs?

23 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: We-- at our last
24 hearing we testified that we are seeking 250 related
25 service providers for our integrated classes and 75

2 related service for our preschool students outside of
3 our integrated programs. So that's 325.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: 325?

5 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: Yes.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Which special
7 education services has the longest wait list, and
8 what's causing the delay in providing that service?

9 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: For preschool
10 special education the longest wait list is for--
11 excuse me one second, Chair, I have it. Thank you,
12 yes. So, we're-- our services where kids are-- were
13 struggling to provide those services. That is not a
14 service that we provide in-house. That is a
15 contracted services that we're looking to do more on
16 that front. You know, the more that we can make
17 inclusive recommendations, the less reliance we have
18 on outside services. That is why we've been really
19 pushing for our in-house evaluation sites. Kids are
20 nine percent more likely to go to an inclusive
21 recommendation if New York City Public Schools
22 evaluates them. So that's a big part of this
23 process. That's why we're pushing for additional
24 evaluators. Monolingual counseling and vision
25 services are another place that we're looking to do

2 more. We-- as you know, recently the Division of
3 Inclusive and Accessible Education has taken over--
4 taken D75 back in our umbrella. That's where vision
5 services lie. We're looking to maximize those
6 services.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You will maximize,
8 okay. What type of service providers are needed for
9 integrated special education classes?

10 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: You know,
11 teachers are a big part of this puzzle for
12 integrated. The Chancellor spoke about the 3,700
13 incoming teachers, preschool teachers, will likely
14 come out in that cohort as well. You heard DC Hawkins
15 talk about all that we're doing to increase, you
16 know, our-- to make the most of our contracts. That
17 enhancement contract for 4410 is doing so much to
18 stabilize the workforce. So we are not seeing losing
19 providers which is really great. That's a big
20 difference from last year, but we will be doing more
21 and more to bring more 4410s online.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What is the current
23 budget headcount and number of vacancies for the
24 Committee on Preschool Special Education
25 administrative staff?

2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: I will need to
3 get back to you on vacancies, Chair.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. And you said
5 some of these services will be provided in-house,
6 correct?

7 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: That's right.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And how much would
9 it cost to provide these services in-house?

10 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: I can get back
11 to you on the headcount needed, Chair. The related
12 service providers are key for that. You know, we are
13 also-- in our last testimony testified needing about
14 47 more CPSE staff.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And what's the long
16 delay with set services? I mean, that's a lot we're
17 hearing from providers. Delay for set services, long
18 delays, what's the problem that is causing a delay
19 with the sets?

20 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: Chair, just to
21 clarify, do you mean CIT?

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: CIT.

23 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: CIT for
24 Preschool? Okay. So, our CIT providers, again,
25 they're-- you know, we work with-- they're largely

2 contracted and those-- you know, we would-- again, we
3 would love to bring those providers in-house so that
4 we can do assignments just like we do for our special
5 education teachers and their related service
6 providers.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Will you be reaching
8 out to community-based organizations for that service
9 as well?

10 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: We're working as
11 much as we can with all of our-- yes. We're working
12 as much as we can with our community partners and
13 contracted agencies.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And trying to hire
15 and bring in-house so we can do that, right? So
16 what's the current budgeted and the headcounts for
17 CIT?

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: I'd have to get
19 back to you on that, Chair.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. Also, we'll
21 send those up in the follow-up. We'll send that up
22 in the follow-up questions for you. So, some of our
23 stuff got baselined, which we're really happy about
24 because that was our sesame word of the day. Sesame
25 Street word of the day was baseline, and think the

2 administration heard it very clear. So, in the
3 Executive Plan, the \$4 million for high-impact
4 tutoring baseline starting in Fiscal 2026. This
5 program works with ExpandedEd schools to bring
6 tutoring to students most impacted by COVID-19. How
7 many schools have partnered with ExpandedEd? Nobody
8 knows?

9 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: We'll
10 get that number to you, Chair. Sorry.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Oh, you'll get that,
12 okay. My partner has a question.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I have a question
14 about the Safe Passages pilot. So, it was a
15 partnership between the Mayor's Office of Criminal
16 Justice and DOE. I thought it was a great program
17 aimed to reduce violence before, during and after the
18 school day. There are a bunch of schools in Coney
19 Island that were receiving Safe Passage funding, but
20 then they were informed-- they informed us that the
21 funding was no longer available. So is Safe Passages
22 discontinued citywide, or was it handed over to DYCD?

23 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: Good afternoon.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: How are you, sir?

2 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: Mark Rampersant, Chief
3 of Safety, Prevention Partnerships.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I've heard of you.

5 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: Have you? So, the
6 program that you are talking about is currently under
7 DYCD.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay.

9 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: it is now the Yes
10 model. And so the way by which they disseminated
11 funding is a little different this year. I don't
12 want to talk about another agency's funding stream or
13 allocation, but they did it a little different. So
14 it was less schools, but more money to schools.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Alright.
16 I'll take it up with them.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: While we're on the
18 subject, Restorative Justice programming,
19 alternatives to suspension and other punitive
20 response to conflict-- and it proves that it works,
21 right? And has trusted relationships between
22 students and teachers. So how many schools have
23 Restorative Justice programming? And we realize we
24 got to cut. My Restorative budget was \$12 million.
25 Now it's down to \$6 million. So how is that going to

2 impact the schools if we really, really want to
3 create safe spaces. Yes, it's \$6 million, not \$12
4 million anymore. Hello.

5 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER SCOTT: so, just
6 a quick correction on that. So, it's \$12 million in
7 Fiscal Year 26, only \$6 million of it is baselined.
8 The other \$6 million made it into 26 and we have to
9 keep advocating for the outyears.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And how many schools
11 does that serve? Put your mic on.

12 DIRECTOR HARRINGTON: Thank you. It's my
13 first time here.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Welcome.

15 DIRECTOR HARRINGTON: Thank you for
16 inviting me. My name is Ms. Linda Harrington. I'm
17 the Citywide Director of Restorative Practices.
18 Chair Joseph, can you ask that question again,
19 please?

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many schools
21 currently have Restorative Justice programming?

22 DIRECTOR HARRINGTON: Currently we have
23 972 schools in total across the City. How-- we have
24 direct-- we work directly with 350 schools, and then
25 we have 682 indirect schools. Let me make sure that

2 number is correct. 682 schools that's indirect. And
3 when I speak about direct schools, that is the
4 central level's restorative team that work in the
5 schools with the staff, the school-based staff.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, because-- so no
7 schools-- we're going to get this straight on the
8 record. So this is \$6 million was baselined, \$6
9 million is-- so altogether is \$12, so no schools will
10 lose their programming? I need that on the record,
11 because my young people call every day when they saw
12 those numbers.

13 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER SCOTT: Yes, it's
14 maintaining the same levels that we had in fiscal
15 year 25, so it just serves the same amount of schools
16 in Fiscal Year 26.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. Thank you.

18 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: So, yes to the service
19 of those schools. We are [inaudible] as the
20 Chancellor mentioned in early conversations. We are
21 looking at the holistic restorative practices to see
22 how we can fuse a great SCL component in there so
23 that we're not only reaching our middle and high
24 schools, we're also meeting our elementary schools as
25 well. So, we'll be talking to you more about what

2 that looks like so that we can get more granular
3 about the overall understanding of restorative, and
4 people don't just perceive it to be circles, right?

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Correct.

6 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: We are meeting the
7 whole child. So, we're absolutely anxious to have
8 those conversations with you as we think about how
9 we're remixing the whole model of restorative
10 practices.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah, it needs a
12 little remixing. Suspension-- and when we talk about
13 public safety, these are the things we talk about,
14 right? So, Chair Stevens and I can always agree on
15 that. Everything in schools attached to-- so by the
16 time a young person picks up a gun, we failed. We
17 don't want to be failing. We want to make sure we're
18 delivering young people, and that includes the jobs
19 we talk about, right? And that includes the
20 investments in mental health. SCL should not be an
21 option. It should be integrated into our curriculum.
22 It should be second nature to our young people. So
23 when we talk about these investments, we talk about
24 this. Safe Passages, as Chair Brannan talked about, I
25 had a school who reached out and said their Safe

2 Passages didn't start until February, and they're
3 part of that Project Pivot. So, we want to know why
4 does it take so long for it to start. There was a
5 school I spoke to-- matter of fact, they were having
6 issues. I went down to see the school, and you know
7 me, Mark, I'm hands on. Nobody's going to come tell
8 me. I'm going to go see myself. And when I got
9 there and I said, "What's happening?" We didn't
10 start seeing Safe Passages until February knowing
11 very well that school needed it from day one to June.
12 So I would love to know what's the thought process
13 behind starting Safe Passages in February when the
14 school starts in September.

15 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: So, 100 percent. I
16 would definitively like to know what that school is
17 because we were intentional about making the dollars
18 available to every one of these schools participating
19 in the Project Pivot initiative in September. So,
20 any school that started the Safe Passage program that
21 was a part of Project Pivot,--

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] It is.

23 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: that ownership is on
24 the respective school as they chose their respective
25 providers. So, I'd love to talk to you more about

2 that as we made the money available to those schools
3 in September.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Because I know those
5 schools were intentional, those were the schools with
6 the highest violence around young people, and those
7 were the intention, but if we're starting in February
8 we're defeating the purpose, right?

9 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: I agree 100 percent,
10 but we should--

11 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: [interposing]
12 But that's the-- sorry to interject, but I think
13 that's what we're saying, Chair, is that we
14 strategically designed it so that wouldn't be the
15 norm, and so I think if we can get the exact DBN
16 offline there's something to investigate there as to
17 what caused the school to have to start so late in
18 the game. And if there are other schools that are
19 doing that, then we encourage the entire Council to
20 let us know, but that's not acceptable, and that
21 certainly is not something it was designed to do.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Student
23 Success Centers, talk to us about that. I know there
24 was a redesign essentially, but we left out one
25 important component which is middle school, right?

2 So, we're seeing-- at a rate for me, this should
3 start in elementary, because a lot of these things,
4 kids disconnecting from school starts from
5 elementary. So, we got to start meeting that need in
6 elementary and stretch it out. We took out middle
7 schools. So, we want to know what's the thought
8 process around it this year. And it's a proven
9 program, right? Every time something works, we take
10 it away. So, it's peer-to-peer where students help
11 their peers with college admission process. The
12 students testified today how much that work has made
13 an impact on him. He test-- he spoke this morning at
14 a rally, and so we're more than 30 high schools
15 across the City. So, we call on the administration
16 to fund this program. So, just want to hear your
17 thought process on that.

18 SENIOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MAC: Thank
19 you, Chair. Melanie Mack, been on a couple of school
20 visits together now. So, you know that there is
21 really deep work happening where we talk about
22 someone like Council Member Stevens nephew taking the
23 big leaps he took after graduation, right, and that's
24 very intentional in terms of the work that we've
25 invested in high school, college, and career

2 advising, in establishing a career navigation
3 roadmap, and finding a way when stimulus funding
4 expired to self-fund the high school Student Success
5 Centers. So, we've continued that investment. There
6 are a few things that we've shifted based on talking
7 to young people, talking to providers, talking to the
8 high schools. The \$3.3 million that we invest in
9 Student Success Centers is going entirely to the high
10 school work, because the previous formula wasn't
11 serving all students and all of the schools on those
12 campuses. So, of 37 schools, 12 FSCs, and 18,000
13 students total. We believe we got the formula right
14 just so that we're hearing from providers, hearing
15 from students and right-sizing what the CBO capacity
16 needs to be to really let the Student Success Center
17 work well. In terms of the middle school Success
18 Centers, we certainly heard your push this year, and
19 we worked with the two middle school Student Success
20 Centers on some one-time bridge funding this year.
21 We spoke with the principal. We spoke with the
22 providers, and talked about what this investment this
23 year could do in terms of helping them with
24 sustainability. We've learned a lot from the middle
25 school Success Centers. Those two served about 150

2 students, and we are looking for bigger impact to all
3 of the push that we've heard from the Council around
4 the absolute importance of college and career
5 exploration happening early and often. And so
6 there's three things that we're doing next year in
7 the middle school space. One is we're testing out
8 digital advising tools with over 5,000 middle school
9 students. When we think about a tool like Zello
10 [sic], when we think about other college and career
11 advising tools that are now available that families
12 can utilize, that school counselors can utilize,
13 providers can utilize with students, really tap into
14 interests, explore careers, explore college options
15 and take those digital portfolios into high school
16 with them as they're looking at the myriad options
17 they have for high schools. So that's one thing is
18 we're investing in that as a more scalable way of
19 expanding college and career exploration in middle
20 school. Two, in our Dream Specialized High School
21 Institute program that's serving thousands of our
22 seventh and, you know, rising eighth graders each
23 year, we are incorporating career exploration into
24 that curriculum alongside the academic readiness. We
25 want our student to see-- as we know, we've done a

2 lot of really good work in the high school space with
3 Future Ready, building on the CTE legacy, really
4 making the college and career opportunities explicit
5 in high school, and so want our middle schoolers to
6 understand what are those options and how can they be
7 grounded in what students are interested in, where
8 they might see themselves, because we know we have
9 many of those pathways to offer them in the high
10 schools. And then there's one more thing that I'm
11 catching myself on that we're doing in the middle
12 school space next year, which is-- I have my handy-
13 dandy notes. I did get that. And then third area
14 is-- over the past couple of years we've developed a
15 career navigation roadmap for high schools. This
16 delineates grade by grade what are the key milestones
17 our students would have access to as they're
18 exploring their careers, as they're building towards
19 their post-secondary plan. We had not yet done the
20 same work in middle school, and so what we'll have
21 next year is the middle school extension of the
22 career navigation roadmap which is a citywide
23 blueprint for what are the key experiences in college
24 and career exploration that every sixth, seventh, and
25 eighth grader should have that we are training our

2 providers and our school counselors, our school
3 leaders and our teachers into. So those are the
4 three areas of investment that we think are important
5 in broadening college and career exploration at the
6 middle school level.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: We were also hearing
8 from providers that they were also not being paid on
9 time. I hope that's something you're planning to
10 work on. And we would love to sit down, because I
11 have quite a few of my colleagues that's really their
12 love and also providers to see how we can map this
13 out and make it available to middle school students,
14 as you mentioned, in expanding their career footprint
15 as they continue to leave our school system. But
16 having the tools in their toolbox and they leave and
17 navigate our school system. So, I think that's very
18 important.

19 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: May I offer
20 that maybe what we can do is set up a briefing,
21 Chair, and whoever you think should be present, but
22 we can share some of the tools and some of the
23 strategies that we're looking at, get your feedback
24 and then figure out a path forward that we all think
25 works.

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: That would be
3 amazing.

4 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Okay.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much,
6 and I think my colleagues would be happy. So,
7 community schools, happy to see it's finally
8 baselined in the Executive Budget for community
9 schools. We've also heard delays in payments to
10 providers for community school programming.

11 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Flavia's making
12 her way up, Chair.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah, I'm waiting. I
14 see you.

15 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: Made my way. So,
16 yes, in terms of community school, we have been
17 working diligently in making sure that contracts are
18 registered first. We had a significant amount of
19 contract that needed to be extended, have been able
20 to register 245 out of the 269. We immediately
21 provided 40 percent advances to those contracts upon
22 registration which in total so far we have dispersed
23 just for the 40 percent advancement, approximately
24 \$52 million. That's another about \$4 million that
25 are in the pipeline of getting paid, and this in

2 addition to payment that we had for outstanding
3 balance or current invoices. So once we do, once we
4 provide the 40 percent advancement, then we recoup
5 the funding, and then once they hit the 40 percent we
6 move to the next payment to issue.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, do you have a
8 number of how many providers you owe?

9 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: I can look into a
10 specific number. I mean, we still paying contract,
11 like contracts for this year, and we still have
12 about-- for the current contracts from the 269, 16
13 that are with the Comptroller that are pending
14 registration and eight that we're working with the
15 contracts for registration.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, how do you plan
17 on addressing the payment delays to provide on-time
18 payment to community schools?

19 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: So, I think
20 there's many ways that we have done that. So, one of
21 those is working closely with the coalition, the
22 CBOs, ensuring that we have ongoing communications
23 with our probational teams so that payments are
24 expedited. They all know and have my phone number
25 and my emails so if they need to get in touch me to

2 request additional support doing that, working
3 closely with our DCP Department as well. Something
4 that I think has been a struggle at least for the
5 last three years that I've been working closely with
6 community schools is that community schools were
7 exponentially expanded all the way through COVID.
8 Our team and our structures were not until recently
9 when this Chancellor through her advocate and this
10 leadership team actually looked at that as also
11 another way to look at our infrastructure and looking
12 at gaps that we have in term of staff. So having
13 more people to be able to work more expeditiously.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So how many people
15 you have on staff now that's--

16 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: [interposing] So,
17 right now we are in the process of bringing 10
18 additional staff members to be able to support the
19 initiative. And just to give you a sense of that, in
20 2022-2023 we added 108 community schools, 2021-2022
21 51, 2018-2019 26. Throughout all that duration this
22 was like doubling up the number of schools that we
23 supported with the same infrastructure until now.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, you have 10 more
25 new staffers on your team?

2 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: We have 10 people
3 that we're working to bring on board, that is
4 correct.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: To bring them on
6 board. So that would help support providers with
7 invoice, paperwork, and all that other stuff. As we
8 mark 10 years of the anniversary of community school
9 initiatives, I'm going to ask for a little data here.
10 What's the student performance data you've been
11 reviewing to evaluate the impact of this model in the
12 last decade, right?

13 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: What I can say is
14 that we have recently been working with the research
15 support, policy group in New York City Public
16 Schools. So, we know from the ram [sic] and other
17 studies that definitely community schools had an
18 impact on improved attendance that we saw across the
19 board that in terms of ELA, math scores, especially
20 long-term when we looked at community schools versus
21 the rest of the City we saw growth, right? And in
22 some cases or in most cases we know that community
23 schools have higher concentration of E&E [sic], have
24 higher concentration of SDH [sic]. So even as we
25 look at like these 10-year studies that you're

2 flagging especially those first subset of community
3 schools that join our pipeline, we can certainly see
4 the growth, and we're happy to sit down with you, do
5 a deeper briefing around that and continuing to think
6 not just about payments, but also about program
7 sustainability and impact--

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing]

9 Correct.

10 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: in each and all of
11 the things that we know that community schools can
12 do.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: We don't want to
14 fund, just fund. We want to make sure it's doing
15 what it's supposed to be doing.

16 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: 100 percent.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, what are some of
18 the strategies you have for summer school
19 implementing strengthening family engagement? And
20 that's something I've always talked about. And how
21 are we measuring these impacts and those efforts
22 because community school is supposed to be holistic
23 approach with family and students? So, what are you
24 seeing and how are you measuring those impacts?

25

2 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: Impact in family
3 engagement through the community school strategy?

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Correct, correct.

5 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: So, the first
6 thing-- yes. For the pillars that we focus on with
7 community school, it's family engagement. So, each
8 of the community schools are required to have more
9 ongoing family events. Even now recently we're
10 focusing on preparing our end of the year event. We
11 have one targeting Manhattan and Brooklyn, one
12 targeting the other boroughs. In addition to that,
13 the school comprehensive educational plan for
14 community schools also has a layer of it that talks
15 about the support and different ways in which we need
16 to engage the whole community's families and the
17 student leadership team for this work.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And around these
19 social safety nets I always talk about attendance.
20 So what are you seeing the difference between
21 attendance trends and schools that are community
22 schools versus schools that are not?

23 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: What I can say is
24 that when we looked at these preliminary approach to
25 looking at 10 years, and we look at particularly

2 chronic absenteeism rate. That when we compare
3 citywide and the dip that we had post-pandemic with
4 community schools, their rate that they were impacted
5 was not as great as the rest of the city. So just to
6 give you a sense-- so it's not just looking at like
7 where we are, because to begin with community school
8 starts with-- these are typically schools that have
9 lower attendance rate--

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing]
11 correct.

12 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: and that have
13 students that have demonstrated more challenges, but
14 even as we recoup from COVID and some of the
15 attendance challenges that we have seen in New York
16 City and across the country, we see that the impact
17 has been less in community schools because of the
18 infrastructure that exists.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, how are we
20 taking some of that best practices and applying it
21 since we have a absenteeism rate across the city?
22 How are we using that? Right? Policy, data supposed
23 to drive that work, right? How are we using that?

24 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: So, we're doing
25 different things. So, in my case because I have the

2 privilege to be able to lead not just community
3 schools, but also students in temporary housing, some
4 of the things that we do is like look at our
5 infrastructure within community schools which
6 students in temporary housing represent about 10
7 percent of the overall population in DOE, but when we
8 look at students in community schools and temporary
9 housing, they represent about 20 percent. So part of
10 what we try to do is like look at the things that
11 have made an impact there for that 20 percent, and
12 how do we look to align those practices with the rest
13 of our schools, including doing pilot program work
14 with attendance teachers to target shelters. Looking
15 at things like access to food security and other
16 things that we have in community schools where we
17 have a large number of food pantries. Looking at
18 some of the CBOs that we have within our communities
19 even if they're not servicing the school, but like
20 what is-- what is impacting and what are the supports
21 that are happening outside, like support with mental
22 health clinics so that we can actually build from
23 that.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I was coming to
25 mental health, but thank you for that. so, how is

2 community schools model assessing the effectiveness
3 of CBO models around mental health? And especially
4 supporting our most vulnerable New Yorkers, right?
5 Like, when you talk about student in STH, foster
6 care, multilanguage students, multilanguage learners,
7 and also our students with IEPs, how does that
8 support?

9 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: Yes. So, part of
10 what happens across our communities schools is that
11 when we expand the community schools, many of them
12 were also expanded with the creation of mental health
13 clinics, clinics within the community schools. So
14 that was part of the effort. And then for those ones
15 that don't have the clinic embedded into the school
16 infrastructure, the CBO that we partner, that's part
17 of our requirement in our contract. They have to
18 ensure that the contract that they have the capacity
19 to either support mental health services or to hire
20 additional providers, and I think the whole concept
21 here is that if we know that we're meeting the whole
22 child needs, right, including mental health, physical
23 health, kids are less likely to be absent and more
24 likely to be engaged. And I think that's why we see
25 some of this other data measures that I flag. So,

2 it's not like a one specific ingredient, but it's all
3 the components of all the things that we do
4 collectively. So, a lot of it is our partnership
5 with DOHMH, with the mental health team and the
6 entire DOE school health support, but also ensuring
7 that the providers have the capacity, prioritize
8 that. That also transfer to things like getting eye
9 exam and eyeglasses. So, if you're in our community
10 schools you know that you're going to get vision
11 screening, that if you need glasses, you're going to
12 get that, and that's like why-- what we embedded in
13 this initiative is really whole child, whole support.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And whole families.
15 Those are--

16 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: [interposing]
17 Absolutely.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: social safety nets
19 that allows students to come to school. First Deputy
20 Chancellor, you agree with me, right?

21 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yes,
22 Chair.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

24

25

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I saw there was
3 \$194 million for school nurses. Could you give us
4 what the breakdown is between contracted DC37 UFT?

5 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Yes, give me
6 one second. So, overall, we have-- by the way, just
7 to say it, that funding was added on top of existing
8 funding to bring us to whole, and so I'm giving you
9 this sort of full capacity, not just that funding.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: What's the-- and
11 what's the total amount now, funding amount?

12 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: That's a
13 great question, and that I don't think I have. We'll
14 get back to you on that.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay.

16 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Overall,
17 across the system we have 2,677 nurses in schools,
18 and those breakdown 1,200 are DOH, 500 staff nurses.
19 So those DC37, 700 agency nurses. New York City
20 public schools, 588 staff nurses, 883 agency nurses
21 for a total of 1,471. And then not assigned to
22 schools-- we can also share all this data with you if
23 helpful.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay.

2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: but not
3 assigned to schools, we can share as well.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Then,
5 question around Restorative Justice and the SEL
6 programs. Is Teacher Center working with Restorative
7 Justice and SEL for 3K to 12?

8 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: The UFT Teacher
9 Center, is that what it is?

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah.

11 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: I'm not completely
12 sure of that. I will get back to you.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay.

14 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: We do value the
15 work of the Teacher Center. As a matter of fact,
16 we're very vocal about that work, and so we're always
17 open to conversations with the UFT on how we can
18 collaborate further, especially around Restorative
19 Justice and the Teacher Center.

20 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: And I know, Chair, you
21 had a specific interest in restorative and school
22 safety agents.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yes.

24 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: I want to just make
25 sure I raise that before you raise it.

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Oh, yeah, that was
3 going to be next, and their hearing is next week. So
4 they were going to hear from me too. So go ahead,
5 you can talk about how-- that's some of the things
6 that the young people are asking for, right?

7 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: Sure.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: that our public
9 safety agents are also training de-escalation and
10 also restorative justice, right?

11 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: Yep. So, as a part of
12 that early conversation, we did have an opportunity
13 to meet with the trainers from the School Safety
14 Division and we were able to identify time over the
15 course of the summer where their trainers will become
16 certified trainers and restorative, and then they can
17 turnkey for all of their 4,000+ school safety agents.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Alright.

19 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: We are monitoring that
20 work as they continue to turnkey the work.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And refreshers, and
22 I also ask for refreshers as well.

23 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: That's why were--
24 that's the reason why we're training their trainers
25 so that they can do the in-service training for the

2 agents who are not only coming on, but the ones who
3 already exist out in the field.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Thank
5 you so much. Our immigrant family engagement, as we
6 know, 40 percent of our students in New York City
7 Public Schools families speak a language other than
8 English at home. So, the Council is pleased that the
9 Executive Budget included \$4 million for FY26 to
10 continue the work with immigrant family communication
11 outreach initiative, a program the Council has
12 continually fought to fund. The initiative helped
13 immigrant families get important information about
14 their child's education through strategies such as
15 sending papers, notices, calling, texting families,
16 collaborating with immigrant-facing CBOs on
17 information campaigns. So this, does the funding
18 added in the Fiscal 26 allow for continuation of this
19 programming at current levels?

20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Hi, good
21 afternoon.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Hi.

23 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Clever Palma,
24 Office of Language Access. Yes, the plans-- the
25 funding will allow for the same program, same

2 initiatives to continue the following school year and
3 also to explore other opportunities to fill in some
4 gaps in our communities.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And why wasn't this
6 funding baselined as well?

7 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER SCOTT: So, I can
8 answer that. That's a decision made by OMB. As you
9 know, we appreciate and always want baseline
10 sustainable funding and we'll continue to work with
11 them.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And is this total
13 funding amount for programming for immigrant families
14 outreach-- the way you're-- at the level you're doing
15 it, making sure there's interpreters, translation of
16 documents going home, text messages, and language
17 access available at school levels as well?

18 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Yes,
19 absolutely.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And in the school
21 meetings as well, high school, middle school
22 applications, is all of that being applied?

23 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Yes, so we are
24 definitely turning up the volume on awareness both on
25 staffing and our communities, but also providing

2 direct support and services to schools at all grade
3 levels.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, in February,
5 Chalkbeat reported that DOE must improve training and
6 oversight at schools to ensure they are providing
7 translation services for families who do not
8 primarily speak English.

9 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You didn't know
11 about the article?

12 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Yes, yes. The
13 question is are we doing-- are we continuing this,
14 or--

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] No, you
16 have to better.

17 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Oh, yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: That's what the
19 article said.

20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Yes, yes. So
21 this spring we rolled out mandatory training for
22 principals and parent coordinators in our schools,
23 and so far we're close to about 50 percent of that
24 target population, and in the fall our plans are to
25 extend training to all school-- public-facing school-

2 based staff so that everybody is aware of how to
3 obtain the services, where to go, and how they work.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Does families know
5 that these services are available at meetings?

6 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Yes. So, our
7 messaging to families and communities are
8 multipronged. You mentioned a few of them already,
9 robocalls, emails, text messages, flyers, mailers,
10 public awareness campaigns, and actually old-school
11 postcards being mailed in the post office. The
12 message here is that translation and interpretation
13 services are available for everything. It's not
14 specific to a particular type of meeting or document.
15 It's for everything. For anything that's necessary
16 for folks to be communicated and engaged in their
17 child's education.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many families
19 requested interpreters at a meeting?

20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: I-- we have
21 over a thousand requests so far this school year for
22 different types of events and they vary from all the
23 way up to the PEP meetings all the way to suspension
24 hearings to CEC meetings and everything in between.
25 But in addition to that, schools do a lot of

2 engagement at the school level, some of which we can
3 account for, and I can get back to you with those
4 specifics, and others which are covered with just
5 bilingual staff who are providing us report every
6 single day.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: When you send that
8 data, send for Fiscal Year 2024 and what you have for
9 2025. How do New York-- how do parents know they
10 have this option available to them? How do they
11 know? I walk into a school building. I'm attending
12 a meeting. How do I know that's available for me?

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: So, two things
14 at the school level. One, it's the welcoming
15 environment, it's the signage. We make a huge effort
16 to make sure that we have signage available in
17 multiple languages so that families can come in and
18 recognize, identify their language and know that
19 services are available. We have other assets
20 available for school safety agents and just the entry
21 point of schools. The other piece here is training,
22 and this is what we talked about just a few minutes
23 ago, is making sure that everybody is aware of what's
24 available, when to do what, and how to get the
25 service itself. So, it's above and beyond just

2 having that one point person, the language access
3 coordinator doing the work. It's about everybody at
4 the school knowing what to do, and that's where we're
5 putting a lot of effort in the training where we plan
6 to do the expanded training in the fall as well.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And that's including
8 principals as well?

9 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Absolutely.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Do you need
11 additional funding to ensure that families who speak
12 a language other than English at home are fully
13 informed about their child's education? If yes, how
14 much?

15 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Always the
16 answer is yes. So, the thing is we're in a system
17 where there's over 180 different languages spoken,
18 and with so many different mechanisms to engage
19 families, our proactiveness and our covered languages
20 only takes us so far. However, we do have supports
21 in additional languages, but the system is so large.
22 You mentioned 40 percent of the families speaking a
23 language other than English. We do have some-- we
24 can base some calculations on what we need based on

2 our current needs and our deficits. I'm happy to
3 share that with you as well.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: We would love that,
5 and I'm sure the Immigration Committee would love a
6 briefing on that to see how we can move forward,
7 especially in these times, right?

8 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Yes.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Chancellor Ramos,
10 you wanted to add something? I saw you pull the mic.
11 You're good? We're good? Let's talk about--

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: [interposing] I've
13 got a follow-up on the nurses. Why do we still have
14 contracted nurses? Why can't we hire for those?

15 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Thank you for
16 the question. So, just to say quickly, as you know,
17 we have nurses both at New York City Public Schools
18 on staff who are UFT members, nurses at DOH on staff
19 who are DC37 members, and then contracted nurses
20 across both agencies. We have dramatically expanded
21 nursing in our schools over the past number of years.
22 That's in part because we are just seeing the demand.
23 That's in part because of the commitment to a nurse
24 in every building that we have maintained. As I
25 said, we have close to 2,700 nurses currently working

2 in our schools. We are always looking to continue to
3 increase our on-staff headcount, but right now we're
4 using the headcount we have and then using contracted
5 nurses to fill those vacancies. We do have a
6 preference, as we know. DOH does as well for staff
7 nurses in both cases serving our kids.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Our literacy
10 program, in the Executive Plan it included \$3.4
11 million in Fiscal 2026 with steady increases in the
12 outyears of associated headcount, additional cost.
13 The funding will support dyslexia and literacy
14 programming including additional initiatives, reading
15 education, IREAD programs at Central Brooklyn
16 Literacy Academy. What is the breakdown for this
17 funding between IREAD and the opening of Central
18 Brooklyn Literacy Academy?

19 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: I think I have
20 that with me, Chair, if you give me one--

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] Thank
22 you.

23 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: Of course. I
24 believe we were funded for four IREAD programs,
25 Chair, but for some reason I-- the peanut gallery--

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] I heard
3 the peanut gallery.

4 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: says we were-- we
5 were funded for three.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I heard the peanut.

7 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: They were
8 waiting for you to ask that question, Chair.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yes. And they
10 answered in unison, too.

11 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: There we go.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, how many new
13 IREAD program-- you said three. How many children
14 will it serve now?

15 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: Peanut gallery?
16 Peanut gallery is referring. They'll be right back
17 to you, Chair.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, so we'll take
19 a commercial break on that.

20 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: Thank you.
21 Alright, Chair, sorry for that. Thank you for your
22 patience. The total enrollment of kids in the IREAD
23 program is 721. As you know, it's an ICT model, and
24 thank you for visiting the IREAD program with us.
25 Student with IEPs is 268, without IEPs is 453. There

2 are 35 sections in school year 24-25 across eight
3 schools.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Will this funding
5 also support programs or interventions?

6 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: That's right.
7 That's exactly right. So, the IREAD program is
8 science reading based. There's a high-quality core
9 instruction as well as interventions in small groups.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And the headcount
11 you added with this expansion, what position will
12 this funding support?

13 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: The-- it
14 supports both teachers in the classroom and it will
15 sustain that level of support, and is growing with
16 the kids.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yes. I saw that.
18 It's good. How will New York City Public Schools
19 enroll students at Central Brooklyn Literacy Academy?
20 How will you enroll?

21 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Chair,
22 they apply through Myschools and then are screened to
23 see whether they have the level of reading challenge
24 that-- it's a similar screening to the screening we
25 use to determine whether a child has dyslexia or the

2 print-based disability just to make sure that they're
3 really going to benefit from the structured literacy
4 program that they provide.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, those students
6 will have priority enrollment?

7 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Oh,
8 yeah. Yeah, I may not have answered actually what
9 you're asking. The student in District 17 will have
10 first priority. After that, it will be the
11 surrounding districts like 23 and 32, and after that
12 will be the rest of-- the rest of Brooklyn, but I
13 have a pretty good feeling we probably won't get
14 beyond the priority districts.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: As you mentioned
16 earlier what are-- are there any eligibility
17 requirements to apply?

18 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yeah,
19 the eligibility requirements are just around the,
20 again, the level of need around literacy. That's
21 what we're screening for. That's what we've been
22 doing in the South Bronx Literacy Academy and we
23 intend to use the same approach for Central Brooklyn.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What's the capacity
25 at the school? How many students will you serve?

2 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: I
3 don't have that in front of me.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: But you'll get that
5 to me, right?

6 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: It's
7 going to be phased in, Chair.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay.

9 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Over
10 time.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What's the first
12 grade level you'll have?

13 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: I
14 think we are second grade, but let me get the phase-
15 in information, because it'll go through eighth
16 grade.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. East
18 River Academy serves incarcerated student on Rikers
19 Island and had a dyslexia screening pilot that began
20 in January of 2024. Please provide an update on the
21 dyslexia screening pilot program. East River
22 Academy, D79.

23 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: We can get you
24 the update, Chair.

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You're going to tell
3 me where they are and how? Because that was
4 something I was pushing when I first got here. I want
5 to hear all of the great progress. Earlier, Council
6 Member Stevens, Chair Stevens, talked about
7 Crossroads and Horizon. You provide the educational
8 opportunities for young people in this center. How
9 many instructional hours do youth in middle school
10 and high school at the detention center receive each
11 week, and what is the graduation rate?

12 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: You
13 know, we'll get in touch with Superintendent Esperanz
14 [sp?] and make sure we get you--

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] We'll
16 get a briefing? You can brief the Chair and I.

17 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yes,
18 ma'am.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Chair Stevens and I,
20 we share custody of this population.

21 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yes.

22 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: So we'll make
23 sure that there's a briefing specifically with
24 Superintendent Esperanz. We'll go do the deep dive
25 in all the programs.

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah, that would be
3 great. I know Emma talked about-- we always talk
4 about transportation, so let's talk about little
5 transportation. How about that? Council was happy
6 that funding was added for Summer Rising in the
7 Preliminary Budget and new commitment to universal
8 after school in the Executive Plan. However, there
9 are still many issues with New York City Public
10 School busing contracts that limits students' ability
11 to participate in these crucial programming.
12 Transportation contracts have been renewed repeatedly
13 for the last 40 years because of an employment
14 protection grandfathered in by the pre-existing
15 contract. If these contracts were rebid with updated
16 provision, we would lose EPPs that were deemed
17 unconstitutional under current state law. At the
18 same time, the current contracts limit, what services
19 can be provided for services disproportionately
20 affecting students with disabilities, students in
21 temporary housing, and students in foster care. Is
22 the DOE interested and supportive of rebidding bus
23 contracts to improve services for New York City
24 Public School students? Emma's favorite topic.

2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Well, I'm so
3 happy because you said everything I would have said
4 in response to you. Yes, we would love to rebid
5 contracts. By the way, they're 45 years old, not 40
6 years old.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Oh, 45.

8 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: 45, happy
9 birthday. Actually, 46 this year. We would love to
10 rebid our contracts, but as you said, we want to make
11 sure that our school bus employees who are not city
12 employees but are working for vendors maintain the
13 protections they have, and the courts have said we
14 cannot currently rebid and include employee
15 protection provisions. There have been bills in
16 front of the state legislature. There is one now.
17 Our hero Senator Jackson is leading on the Senate
18 side, and we would very much like to see that
19 legislation passed so we can do this.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: See, the RJs are
21 getting it done here. So, you're advocating for
22 that. Will you consider renewing the contracts that
23 expired in 2025 for one year in order to resolve
24 issues with the new RFP in 2026?

2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: We have been
3 working-- because we can't rebid the contracts
4 without hurting our school bus employees, we have
5 been working on extending the contracts. We've been
6 in negotiations with our bus vendor. It's for
7 roughly forever, but certainly for many months and
8 many negotiating sessions. As you know, when we are
9 extending contracts as opposed to rebidding them, we
10 have far less negotiating ability because we need to
11 continue and we need to continue with this set of
12 vendors. So, we are interested in shorter contracts,
13 but-- shorter extensions, but we are in ongoing
14 negotiations with them.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What can Council do
16 and we have been doing to support the effort to rebid
17 the busing contract as soon as possible?

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Yeah,
19 appreciate that question. I will say, just bringing
20 it back to basics, we need to get this legislation
21 passed, right? We want to make sure we're protecting
22 our workers, even if they're not working for us. We
23 need to get new bus contracts to better serve our
24 kids and families. We need more accountability, and
25 we need more flexibility, as you flag every single

2 time, around Summer Rising and afterschool. We need
3 to do things like quickly transition to electric
4 buses, as well, right? There's a lot we need to do
5 that we need to rebid to be able to do, and getting
6 that legislation passed is really key for that.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And how many
8 [inaudible] students with IEPs are still waiting for
9 bus service?

10 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR VADEHRA: Yes, so we
11 are currently busing roughly 62,000 students with
12 IEPs on our buses. We have about 100 currently
13 waiting for busing at this moment in time. As you
14 know, that number fluctuates. So, 100 out 62,000.
15 Of that 100 about 75 have only come to us in the past
16 five days, and so we're working through that 100, but
17 most of them are fairly short term.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And students, many
19 students have transportation paraprofessionals
20 mandated on their IEP still waiting for
21 paraprofessionals and therefore unable to ride the
22 bus, and what's the number on that?

23 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR FOTI: There are 160
24 students that we're working with agencies to arrange
25 paraprofessional coverage for. This is after

2 canvassing their school, then canvassing schools in
3 their area, and then canvassing their district, and
4 offering these positions to our paraprofessionals in
5 our schools. But we're going to continue to work
6 with these agencies, Chair, to arrange services.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And to do outreach
8 to make sure we're employing paraprofessionals as
9 well? Because this has been a longstanding issue.
10 Deputy Chancellor, you had something to add?

11 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Just
12 wanted to get back to you, Chair, and to Chair
13 Brannan if I could quickly on Central Brooklyn
14 Literacy Academy. When fully phased in it'll have
15 about 300 students and is opening with second and
16 third grade, about 40 students or so one grade. So, I
17 wanted to get back to you on that. And Chair
18 Brannan, on high impact tutoring, that is a strategy
19 we're using at 106 schools across 12 districts,
20 affecting about 2,000 students.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Continue. Alright,
22 cellphone bans enacted in 2026 state budget which
23 include a statewide cellphone ban in schools, the
24 policy leaves room for school districts to tailor
25 their own plans for cellphone ban and budget includes

2 limited funding for implementation. This is not the
3 first time New York City Public School had a cell
4 phone ban and many schools have already implemented
5 their own. I remember back under the First Deputy
6 Chancellor, Mayor Bloomberg had a school ban. Uh-huh.
7 You see he's laughing. He knows exactly why. How
8 many schools already have a cell phone ban, and would
9 those schools need to change their policy in order to
10 be aligned with the state policy? Are we relying on
11 SLT again to step in and really support that work?

12 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: You know how
13 much I love talking about this, Chair.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I know you do.

15 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: So, we are
16 excited about the flexibility in the language because
17 in this great large school system we continue to
18 stress that one size does not fit all. I was
19 principal. I collected cellphones, 400 cellphones.
20 Definitely don't suggest that. some of my schools I
21 have 4,000 kids collect cellphones, right? And so,
22 there is a restriction bell to bell, but it doesn't
23 say that schools have to collect. And so that is
24 great. We are working on updating our regulation
25 where needed, because again, we want to make sure

2 that schools are empowered to make the best decision.
3 That being said, it is not just reliance upon the
4 SLT, because this is no longer an option, and so
5 working very, very closely with superintendents and
6 principals, identifying those best practices whether
7 it is collection or it is, you know, simply storing
8 away, whatever model works best for the school, but
9 obviously superintendents and principals are going to
10 need some support, although a great number of our
11 schools already have some sort of a restriction
12 policy in place.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: The state policy
14 outline that any device that connects to the internet
15 include laptop, tablet, smart watches are banned as
16 well. How will DOE implement that aspect of the ban?

17 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Okay. All
18 based on the context of the school. If it's a
19 locker, if it's one of the magnetic pouches, if it's
20 collection those are all the things that we need to
21 outline as some of the best practices. Again, when I
22 collected, the bags were getting bigger and bigger,
23 because as the devices got more sophisticated I just
24 took it all. But we know that's not going to be the
25 case for every single school. So, relying on those

2 best practices and hearing not only from the
3 principals, but also from the teachers, the students
4 and the families themselves and figuring out which
5 are the best models that we can put forth for the
6 individuals schools and districts.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Will there be
8 exceptions for student who use their cell phones for
9 language access, caregiver responsibility, student
10 with IEP disability aid? Are there any other
11 students who may see exceptions who will be able to
12 implement it, is that being thought at as well?

13 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Of course.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, is the state
15 funding-- is the funding provided by the state
16 sufficient to implement a cell phone bill-- cell
17 phone ban across the schools?

18 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Well, I think
19 we need to see how the funding is going to be
20 allocated across the state. Again, with the language
21 being a little bit more flexible than what we
22 originally heard. We know that we will figure this
23 out, but in terms of the funding, to be continued.

24

25

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Will there be an
3 RFP for that? We don't know. We're asking. So, the
4 pouches, like my kiddo got a Yanga [sic] pouch.

5 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: We need to
6 again see how the money is going to be distributed.
7 We don't talk about Yonder [sic]. We talk about
8 magnetic pouches. I know many schools are using
9 them, but again these are all things that we are
10 working through right now.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, all things are
12 on eth table right now until we figure it out.
13 Something's going to stick right? Earlier Council
14 Member Stevens talked about having employments for
15 young people. I know at one point we had it all year
16 round for young people back in the days. the First
17 Deputy Chancellor, under your former boss there was
18 programs that allow young people to work rear-round
19 and they had a lot of-- these are some of the young
20 folks that are bringing this to our attention, right?
21 These are things they would love to see, to ork all
22 year round, not just for summer youth, but just would
23 love to ee a year-round employment where we employ
24 our young people in afterschool coop models where
25 student were working one week and going to school one

2 week. Some folks were talking about bringing that
3 model back. First Deputy Chancellor, any take on
4 that?

5 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Let's
6 see if our Pathways team wants to respond, but you
7 know, part of what's baked into our Future Ready
8 approach is customization.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Right.

10 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: So,
11 you know,-- so, it wouldn't surprise me if we have
12 some of those models at play right now. And you
13 know, it's going to be driven by both student
14 engagement and need, but also what's effective in
15 making them college and career ready.

16 SENIOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MAC: I'll just
17 add to what the First Deputy Chancellor shared.
18 Thank you, Chair. So a number of our education
19 pathways and Future Ready in particular are exploring
20 using the coop model, not exclusively there, but we
21 are definitely seeing a lot of that where student are
22 exploring education pathway. They're beginning to do
23 teacher assisting and supporting in different
24 functions in the school. So we're going to continue
25 to focus on the ways that we can allow our student to

2 see themselves potentially working in the field of
3 education across New York City Public Schools, and
4 one of the ways that we'll focus this summer will be
5 planning with high schools, we'll be planning with
6 superintendents, and thinking about the ways-- work-
7 based learning opportunities become more and more
8 accessible because we also know that unpaid work
9 experiences can count for credit if they meet
10 specific standards. We know that this is something
11 that is going to continue to evolve as we look at
12 state graduation requirements. So, we're really
13 excited about the ways we already have a lot of
14 innovation across our schools, and we'll spend some
15 time planning with our schools and districts about
16 how we continue to build on internship opportunities
17 including those that are home-grown and happening in
18 the school level. And obviously, you heard from
19 Council Member Stevens, too, there are models like
20 our apprenticeship work where student are spending
21 half and half of the week either in their school
22 building or at their apprenticeship site, including
23 in our own office. We host four apprentices who
24 spend 20 hours a week with us. They arrive in the
25 afternoon. They have a full set of work assignments

2 as well as a number of my other central colleagues
3 here and colleagues across city agencies. So, we're
4 continuing to build on that notion that there are
5 strong work-based learning, rigorous opportunities
6 that are available in the school system and in City
7 agencies.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you for that.
9 I think Council Member Brannan has a couple of
10 follow-ups.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Head Start follow-
12 up, I think from earlier. So, data that New York
13 City Public Schools provided this morning seems to
14 indicate that Head Start capacity will decrease by
15 3,500 seats for ages three to four, and early Head
16 Start would only increase by over 860 seats. So,
17 will the overall Head Start capacity decrease in the
18 new application?

19 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: I'm going to
20 answer that in two ways, Chair, and I'll be quick.
21 And so the SEEK configuration in the application,
22 yes, it would decrease, and that's what we are
23 proposing, but I would like to say we've been
24 persistently under-enrolled year over year for our
25 five-year grant. And so Head Start expects 97

2 percent to be considered full enrollment. We've been
3 around 65 percent. And so, prior to being entered
4 into the designated renewal system, we were required
5 to adjust our capacity anyway. And so, we decided to
6 do that to make sure we submitted a viable
7 application. However, because of the investment
8 we're able to sustain the current system in addition
9 to any potential funding we'll get from Head Start.
10 And so, it would only be a net add. So, yes, the
11 application is suggesting a decrease, but we are
12 maintaining the current system as well.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. And I have
14 another-- just a clarification from folks back at
15 mission control here asking about the ACS vouchers.
16 So, the data that ACS gave us yesterday shows that
17 there's 19,801 ACS vouchers that are going towards
18 pre-school age children. If the funding for these
19 vouchers is not in the budget for FY26, does that
20 mean that there 19,801 seats that will not exist in
21 2026?

22 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR HAWKINS: So, vouchers
23 are not synonymous with seats, but I would suggest,
24 you know, we'll get back to ACS with that specific
25 question so we can get clarification for you. It's

2 not all apples to apples. Our contracted care system
3 has a designated number of distinct seats funded with
4 the same type of money. And so there is a capacity
5 to absorb children who would normally qualify for
6 those means-tested seats which include kids who would
7 normally qualify for vouchers, but vouchers cover
8 whole families, not just specific age groups. And so
9 that's a very dynamic question, so I want to make
10 sure we check with ACS to make sure we get you the
11 proper response.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, thank you.
13 Chair Joseph?

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thanks-- thank you,
15 New York City Public Schools.

16 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Thank you.

17 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Thank
18 you very much, Chair.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Class dismissed.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we're going
21 to take say a five-minute-- oh, we want to hear from
22 the first panel of students actually before the
23 break, and then we'll hear from our unions and the
24 rest of the public. [gavel] If I could just get
25 quiet, please. Alright, we're going to call up our

2 next panel. Genesis Enriquez [sp?], Maya Contreras
3 [sp?], Soha Ulkich [sp?], Ulrich-- I can't read it,
4 I'm sorry-- and Martin Quirez [sp?]. you want to
5 start? Go ahead. Just turn on your mic.

6 MAYA CONTRERAS: Good afternoon, my name
7 is Maya Contreras. I am currently an 11th grade
8 student at the Early College High School for
9 Emergency Medicine located in lower Manhattan. I'm
10 pleased to be here today alongside my incredibly
11 brave Teen CPR team members. We're part of a
12 student-led effort to educate our peers in all high
13 schools across New York City in saving lives with CPR
14 skills. For the past few years, we worked with
15 American Heart Association to try to bring hands-only
16 CPR training to every school student in New York
17 City. Our goal is simple. We want to make sure that
18 no one is unprepared when a cardiac emergency
19 happens. As a team of young aspiring students, we
20 launch out into our community teaching and everyone
21 the life-saving skill of CPR. Just recently we were
22 at a Gotham Park and City Hall teaching and
23 advocating to emphasize the need for change. We've
24 learned that when a person's heart stops every second
25 counts, and yet most people don't know what to do.

2 That's something we can fix, and it starts with
3 training students like us. We're not just here as
4 high schoolers. We're here to voice those lives lost
5 due to cardiac arrest in our city, and as
6 representatives of your future EMTs, nurses, and
7 doctors, and most importantly, as people who are
8 eager in making a real difference in our communities.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very
10 much. Go ahead.

11 SOPHIA ULRICH: Good afternoon. My name
12 is Sophia. I am also a member of the Teen CPR Team at
13 the Early College High School of Emergency Medicine.
14 Cardiac arrest happens with the heart suddenly stops
15 beating. It can take place anywhere, in class, on
16 the train, or on the streets. Who knows. But here's
17 what we do know, 70 percent of cardiac arrests that
18 happen outside of the hospital occur at home, yes,
19 your home. So, we want people to see that the life
20 they're most likely to save is someone they love.
21 Without help, brain damage can start in just four to
22 six minutes, but here's the good news: hands-only CPR
23 and AED can double or even triple that person's
24 chances of surviving. I personally remember the first
25 time I learned CPR. The thought of having someone's

2 life in my hands was overwhelming but also
3 motivating. Questions like, what if I hurt the
4 individuals changed to I'm the reason the person is
5 going to live. That training gave me confidence, and
6 I know it can do the same for others. The most
7 important part of the training for me was getting to
8 actually practice on the mannequins we have at
9 school. I felt a lot more confident after that. Now
10 imagine if every New York City high school student
11 were trained in those skills, that would be about
12 65,000 potential life-savers every year. That's not
13 just a number. That's lives saved on the subways, in
14 apartment buildings and on city sidewalks. We have
15 the power to turn bystanders into first responders,
16 and that starts in our classroom.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

18 GENESIS: Good afternoon. My name is
19 Genesis and I'm also a member of the Teen CPR team at
20 EChem. There's another side of this that really hits
21 home for a lot of us. People who live in low-income
22 Black or Hispanic neighborhoods such as the
23 communities where we come from are more likely to
24 suffer cardiac arrest and less likely to receive CPR
25 from a bystander. That's not fair. Honestly, it's

2 heart-breaking. It means that where someone lives
3 could decide whether they live or die. That's a huge
4 part of why we started our Teen CPR Team in the first
5 place. With ambulance responses times averaging more
6 than 10 minutes, we cannot wait for someone else to
7 fix the problem. We want to be part of the solution.
8 At our school in lower Manhattan we work with
9 hundreds of student already and we're just getting
10 started. When we teach our classmates, we're not
11 just teaching CPR, we're building a culture where
12 helping each other is normal, expected, and possible
13 this training is about giving every student in every
14 borough and every neighborhood regardless of income,
15 color, or status the chance to be a hero. This is
16 about expanding access. Students who receive this
17 training can take it home to their families, friends,
18 and neighbors. This would dramatically increase the
19 number of people in these underserved communities who
20 could potentially step in to save a life if needed.
21 CPR training via public schools will help access and
22 address the current inequalities.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

24 MARTIN QUIRES: Is this on? I am Martin
25 Quires [sp?] and me and my team came here to ask you

2 for your support and furthermore, \$500,000 to be in
3 the next budget, in the next city budget to ensure
4 that every New York City high school student can get
5 the opportunity and chance to learn CPR and AED use.
6 This funding would go towards equipment and training
7 instructors and to build a program that works across
8 all public schools and not just some, because there
9 has been lacks of CPR training. So, we have talked
10 to friends and family members who attended other
11 schools around New York City and most did not receive
12 CPR education anywhere close to how it is done in our
13 school, and we want to make sure that there's
14 equitable access to this life-saving skill across all
15 of New York City. We believe that this investment
16 will save lives. We've already seen what's possible
17 when students like us are given the chance to learn.
18 Now, we want the opportunity for every teen in the
19 City. So, me, my team and all of New York City's
20 high school students hope that you can support us and
21 advocate for us to practice the usage of CPR. Thank
22 you.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all very
24 much.

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you for your
3 testimony, and I hope New York City Public Schools is
4 here listening to you for the need. How many lives
5 would we save if you were all trained?

6 SOPHIA ULRICH: How many lives in general
7 you would say? I can't give you like statistics, but
8 I do know that knowing CPR can double or even triple
9 the chances of someone surviving a cardiac arrest.
10 Because as you know, in New York City I believe it
11 takes about five to nine minutes for the ambulance to
12 get to a person. So being able to help keep the
13 brain alive is life saving need.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: There you go. Thank
15 you. Thank you all.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all very
17 much.

18 [applause]

19 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Alright, we're
20 going to take like a 10-minute break to stretch our
21 legs, and then we're going to return to hear from the
22 unions. Thank you.

23 [break]

24

25

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: We're resuming back in
3 the chambers. Everyone have a seat. Please and
4 thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. [gavel]
6 Okay, welcome back. We're now going to start our
7 public testimony, starting with the unions. I think
8 we have more folks here than we have chairs, so we'll
9 have to cycle out. Henry Rubio, CSA; Sally Ann
10 Bongiovi Famuloso [sp?], Mary Vaccaro, Karen Alford,
11 Roseanne Kneubuhl, Tina Puccio, Priscilla Castro
12 [sp?], Maria Morales, Glenys Rivera, and Joe Alusio
13 [sp?]. I have to read this. I remind members of the
14 public that this is a government proceeding. Decorum
15 shall be observed at all times. As such, members of
16 the public shall remain silent at all times. The
17 witness table is reserved only for those who are
18 testifying. No video or-- no video recording or
19 photography is allowed from the witness table.
20 Members of the public may not present audio or video
21 recordings as testimony, but they may submit
22 transcripts of such recordings to the Sergeant at
23 Arms for inclusion in the official hearing record.
24 If you wish to speak at today's hearing, please make
25 sure-- and you're here today in the chambers-- make

2 sure you fill out an appearance card with the
3 Sergeant at Arms in the back. It's one of these
4 little papers. If you don't fill this out, we don't
5 know who you are. We can't call you up. And if you
6 have a written statement or additional written
7 testimony you wish to submit for the record, please
8 provide a copy of that testimony to the Sergeant at
9 Arms. You can also email written testimony to
10 testimony@council.nyc.gov within 72 hours of this
11 hearing. Audio and video recordings will not
12 accepted. Okay. We'll start with Henry Rubio.

13 HENRY RUBIO: Good afternoon, Chair
14 Joseph and Chair Brannan, and thank you for this
15 opportunity. Of course, our champion speaker here.
16 Thank you for your leadership and the opportunity to
17 speak today on behalf of the 17,000 in-service and
18 retired school leaders and administrators here in New
19 York City. Again, this budget is an example of the
20 hard work and advocacy and collaboration that you've
21 had with stakeholders, union leaders, the Mayor's
22 Office, all in the service of New York City children
23 and their families and we commend you and have great
24 gratitude for you. Our written testimony applauds
25 all the funding and programs that are critical to our

2 students in Early Childhood programs. So, you have
3 it already. However, I want to talk a little bit
4 about what hasn't been talked about today. Our
5 schools cannot thrive without safety, and we must be
6 honest about where we stand today. The shortage of
7 safety agents is deeply concerning to our school
8 leaders, particularly in the absence of a
9 comprehensive plan for recruiting and retaining them.
10 Some of our school campuses lack adequate safety
11 coverage and have yet to receive the scanners that
12 they have formally requested. Meanwhile, the majority
13 of our Early Childhood education centers are
14 vulnerable despite the fact that violence does not
15 discriminate by age or by governance model, whether
16 you're in the DOE or a community-based organization.
17 So today, we urge you as partners in the City Council
18 to work with us in advocating for first, a citywide
19 plan to increase and equitably deploy school safety
20 agents based on the actual need. Two, invest in
21 critical safety infrastructure, additional cameras,
22 scanners, and security systems so that every school
23 staff and student feels safe. The restoration of
24 practices like safe corridor. And of course, let me
25 be clear, we recognize that true safety extends

2 beyond policy and technology. It is rooted, we know
3 this as educators, in culture, connection and care.
4 And so in our written testimony you have a 10-point
5 safety plan that speaks exactly to that. So, for
6 example, students need access to guidance counselors
7 with a reasonable caseload. They need a systemic
8 conflict resolution program, peer mediation,
9 restorative justice practices that fully embed into
10 the fabric of schools. You heard today that only 57
11 percent, over 700 schools still don't have-- are not
12 being touched by those programs. Every educator in
13 our school and our leaders receive training-- needs
14 to receive training around this area, and we also
15 need to have an assistant principal in every school.
16 One school leader alone cannot be expected to do it
17 all. When a principal is forced to choose between
18 instructional leadership and crisis response, it is
19 the students that suffer. The model is not
20 sustainable. And lastly, we need to support our
21 school leaders with high-quality professional
22 development, and we're asking the Council to baseline
23 additional funding for our executive leadership
24 program. Thank you for the opportunity to be here
25 with you today.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very
3 much. You want to start from the left and go across?

4 HENRY RUBIO: Sure.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Just turn on your
6 mic, please.

7 MARIA MORALES: Can you hear me?

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yes.

9 MARIA MORALES: Good afternoon, Madam
10 Chair and members of the council. My name is Maria
11 Morales. I am the Parent and Community Liaison for
12 the United Federation of Teachers. I'm here today to
13 speak with you about the United Federation of
14 Teachers anti-bullying program. The UFT created
15 BRAVE, Building Respect, Acceptance and Voice through
16 Education program as an immediate compassionate
17 resource for any child experiencing bullying because
18 every student deserve to feel safe, seen and
19 supported. The BRAVE hotline is available from two
20 o'clock in the afternoon to 9:30 at night on
21 weekdays. They could be reached by phone, chat, or
22 text at 917-727-1908. The hotline is staffed by
23 licensed counselors and trained professionals who
24 provide confident [inaudible] support, guidance, and
25 crisis interventions to students and families in

2 need. Between July 2024 and March 2025, BRAVE
3 supported over 4,000 students, 900 parents, and 600
4 educators, a powerful reminder that bullying affects
5 our entire school community. BRAVE also delivers
6 anti-bullying workshops each year to hundreds of
7 students, parents and educators, and works to ensure
8 that critical anti-bullying resources are visible and
9 accessible in every school. But we know that we need
10 to do more. That's why we are asking the City
11 Council for an additional \$300,000 to expand these
12 life-changing workshops and to create a digital
13 resource hub with multilingual guides to help
14 student, families and school staff navigate bullying,
15 report safely, and access mental health support.
16 With your continued partnership we can extend BRAVE's
17 outreach and continue to build safer and more
18 inclusive communities for every child in our city.
19 Thank you.

20 ROSANNE KNEUBUHL: Good afternoon,
21 Chairs. Good afternoon Committee Council. My name is
22 Rosanne Kneubuhl. I'm a representative of the UFT's
23 Dial a Teacher. I'm proud to say that I've been a
24 Dial a Teacher for the past 16 years. UFT's Dial a
25 Teacher program answered over 35,000 calls last year

2 from student and parents, not only for homework help,
3 but to provide parents with information about
4 everything from curriculum to how to navigate what
5 can be a really confusing educational system. Dial a
6 Teacher was founded in January 1980 with five
7 teachers fielding questions from 17 elementary
8 schools in eight districts. Since then the program
9 has grown immensely and serves the entire city. It
10 now operates Monday through Thursday from 4:00 p.m.
11 to 7:00 p.m. with requests from parents to actually
12 extend the Dial Teacher hours. Program employs 40
13 teachers and serves students through to their college
14 years. Dial a Teacher also offers help in nine
15 languages including Spanish, Mandarin, Bengali, and
16 French-Creole. The City Council has supported Dial
17 a Teacher from the very beginning. The support has
18 enabled us to purchase additional reference
19 materials, textbooks as well as to hire experts in
20 advance math and science so we can serve those older
21 students. However, for the past 25 years, the funding
22 support has not increased in proportion to the rise
23 and needs for this extremely impactful program. We
24 could do more. We could help students and families
25 in these very uncertain times. Our teachers often

2 act as interpreters for parents who feel more
3 comfortable asking for assistance by phone than in
4 person. So, we are asking for \$300,000 so that we
5 can hire more teachers, so that we can answer 50,000
6 calls, upgrade our whiteboard technology and remote
7 online platform as well as provide staff with
8 professional development that will enhance our
9 ability to serve student in this 21st century
10 academic and technological era. Thank you for giving
11 me this opportunity.

12 KAREN ALFORD: Good afternoon. Good
13 afternoon, City Council Members and Chair Joseph. My
14 name is Karen Alford, and I'm the UFT's Vice
15 President for the elementary schools as well as our
16 point-person for United Community Schools. Where we
17 are now in 2025 is schools are more than just
18 academic learning centers. They're also social
19 safety nets, and that is where community schools come
20 into being and into purpose. We began this work in
21 2012. Our work makes sure that we provide schools
22 with health, mental health, academic, enrichment,
23 social and wellness services in all of our schools,
24 and the greatest impact happens on the lives of our
25 student and their families. Because of your insight,

2 because of your partnership with us we've gone from
3 six schools to 32 schools across New York City, and
4 our New York City schools, what we've seen in just
5 this school year alone, 25,000 mental health visits,
6 32,000 health, dental and wellness visits, and we've
7 fed over 35,000 families. Ninety-three percent of
8 our families have said to us at our food pantries
9 because of them they've eaten more fruits and
10 vegetables and that they've received from United
11 Community Schools. This level of support as we wrap
12 around services around our students, what we see our
13 better outcome, higher test scores, better
14 attendance, more high school credits earned, and an
15 increased sense of safety and connection within our
16 school community. What makes the magic? Our UCS
17 coordinators in each school, as well as our six
18 social workers. We don't take a cookie-cutter
19 approach to the work. Each school has a unique
20 profile of services and support. What is consistent,
21 that for every dollar invested, there's six dollars
22 in program that's delivered. So, there's a six to
23 one return on investment, and we are here today
24 requesting \$5 million of City Council investment in
25 UCS. Thank you so much.

2 TINA PUCCIO: Good afternoon. My name is
3 Tina Puccio, and I'm here today to speak to you about
4 the UFT Member Assistance Program and the Positive
5 Learning Collaborative which provides vital mental
6 health support and programming to our educators,
7 students, and families in need. Sixteen years ago,
8 the UFT launched MAP to fill the void when it was
9 clear that these educators have nowhere to go for
10 mental health. We became the supplemental program
11 for DOE employees. Our initiatives have addressed
12 the growing mental health and wellness crisis in New
13 York City. In 2019, we were serving an average of
14 4,500 members. By 2021 because of the pandemic,
15 close to 32,000 educators were asking for our help
16 virtually. Today, over 40,000 educators are seeking
17 out our support groups, individual counseling,
18 continuing education courses and wellness workshops
19 because they trust MAP. They feel safe with MAP and
20 they know that it won't take three months to get
21 someone to help them. We have extended our
22 programming to serve students as well. Our most
23 popular initiative is called Let's Talk About It. It
24 is a field trip for middle school students which
25 helps students learn to express their emotions in

2 healthy and adaptive ways. Since 2018, we have
3 served over 2,000 middle school students connect and
4 understand their feelings through mindfulness, music
5 and other creative methods. This year, over 300
6 District 25 and 200 Title I students from District
7 Nine attended. I'm asking the City Council to
8 support a trusted program that is already anchored in
9 the lives of the members we represent. Your funding
10 and support will help us expand our Let's Talk About
11 It middle school's field trip to all five boroughs,
12 increase the number of educators we can invite to our
13 annual mental health symposium and addiction
14 symposium, this being one of the largest and most
15 popular clinical conferences offered to over 2,500
16 school social workers and psychologists, and lastly,
17 to produce more than 200 continuing education courses
18 for our social workers and psychologists. Thank you.

19 UNIDENTIFIED: I am back again with a
20 different UFT initiative that we would love to
21 present to you--

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: [interposing] I
23 think we're going to keep going.

24 UNIDENTIFIED: that you have on the
25 docket.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Let's keep going
3 that way.

4 UNIDENTIFIED: That way? Okay.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah, thanks.

6 MARY VACCARO: Good afternoon. On
7 behalf-- I'm Mary Vaccaro, Vice President of
8 Education and Executive Director of the Teacher
9 Center. On behalf of our over 190,000 members of the
10 United Federation of Teachers, we thank you Chair
11 Joseph and the entire Education Committee for
12 granting us this time to present our initiatives.
13 For over 45 years, the UFT Teacher Center has
14 provided cutting-edge, high-quality, professional
15 development for our educators. Thanks due to the
16 funding of the City Council, we now have supported
17 well over 210 Teacher Center embedded throughout our
18 City schools, an 80 percent increase from 115 sites
19 in 2021. Each of our sites has experienced UFT
20 Teacher Center coaches who provide professional
21 development, one on one support to teachers on topics
22 of their choosing. This allows teachers to
23 constantly hone their craft and to reach their
24 students effectively. In addition to their on-site
25 work, the Teacher Center holds sold-out seminars in-

2 person, online and hybrid settings. These seminars
3 close out because they're focused on what teachers
4 want to know and they're interactive, vibrant and
5 engaging, and many leave with the materials that they
6 need. Together, the UFT Teacher Centers annually
7 provide over 125,000 hours of transformative
8 professional development for over 317,000 educators
9 in all titles. Over the past two years, this work has
10 included playing an integral part in the roll out of
11 the New York City Reads initiative and supporting the
12 new math curriculum. We have district coaches and
13 field staff embedded in schools year-round provide
14 implementation support to teachers as they navigate
15 the new curricula. These coaches help educators dig
16 deeper into the units of study and assessments. This
17 important work is why we are asking \$6.5 million in
18 Speaker funds and \$4.12 million in City Council
19 funding. We want to expand this work and continue to
20 ensure that educators are prepared to provide the
21 social and emotional supports their students need to
22 address these challenging times. Many students have
23 experienced trauma or are new-arrivals in this city.
24 We equip educators with culturally-responsive toolkit

2 that enables them to reach all types of students.
3 Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

5 SALLY-ANN BONGIOVANNI-FAMULARO: Good
6 afternoon. I'm Sally-Ann Bongiovanni-Famularo, the
7 Director of PROSE for the UFT. The PROSE initiative
8 empowers educators to think outside the box and
9 implement the most innovative ideas to better serve
10 students and families. Schools within PROSE are
11 granted contractual and regulatory flexibilities so
12 they can change how their schools are typically run
13 in key ways, including how their school days are
14 programmed, how their teachers are hired, and how
15 their students are assessed. There are over 250
16 PROSE schools within our network that serve over
17 80,000 students, making PROSE enrollment larger than
18 all of the Boston public schools combined. Many of
19 the schools within PROSE are consortium and
20 international network high schools that have an
21 emphasis on project-based learning and serve students
22 who are new arrivals in our city. PROSE gives its
23 schools a unique ability to respond to what their
24 students and family want and need. For instance, the
25 Urban Assembly Unison School in Brooklyn offers

2 cooking classes, a hydroponic lab, and other valuable
3 enrichment opportunities during the school day. The
4 demand to join the PROSE initiative has grown each
5 year and we are eager to expand the program. We are
6 also eager to facilitate the sharing of best
7 practices amongst educators at PROSE schools, as well
8 as with educators at non-PROSE schools. There is
9 very little time to share or generate new creative
10 ideas throughout the school day. This is why we're
11 requesting \$300,000 in City Council funds for the
12 2025-26 school year to bring educators together and
13 host events at UFT that create time for sharing.
14 Magic happens at PROSE schools every day, and we are
15 eager to find ways to bottle it up and share that
16 magic with other district schools. Thank you.

17 PRISCILLA CASTRO: Good afternoon. My
18 name is Priscilla Castro and I am the UFT Chapter
19 Chair for 26,000 paraprofessionals who work in New
20 York City public schools. We are asking you to call
21 a hearing and vote for passage of Intro 1261, the
22 Para Respect Check legislation. This legislation
23 would give every UFT representative paraprofessionals
24 a permanent recurring annual payment of \$10,000 or
25 more. Paraprofessionals are the backbone of our

2 public schools. They work in lock-step with teachers
3 to provide our children with the support and
4 education they are entitled to, especially our
5 special needs students. The City reliance on pattern
6 bargaining does not work for paraprofessionals.
7 Paraprofessionals start at under \$32,000 a year. So,
8 a three percent raise for a paraprofessional equals
9 \$900. Yet, the highest-paid position in a school
10 building, a principal, a three percent increase
11 equals a \$6,500 raise. This legislation was carefully
12 crafted to fall outside of pattern bargaining.
13 Funding would come from general funds. It would not
14 be pensionable. It would be the first step in
15 creating a legal alternative to pattern bargaining.
16 We will face a shortage this fall of over 4,000
17 paraprofessionals despite aggressive hiring efforts.
18 People cannot stay in a position no matter how much
19 they love it. If they struggle to care for their own
20 family and children for the stake of our students and
21 our paraprofessionals in our public schools, I urge
22 you to hold a hearing and vote to pass the Para
23 Respect legislation. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

1
2 KAREN ALFORD: Thank you. Again, Karen
3 Alford, UFT's Vice President for the Elementary
4 Schools and I'm here to shine a spotlight on our
5 newest UFT initiative, the NYC Childcare Navigator.
6 As a new parent I was filled with anxiety around the
7 fact that I knew I had to go back to work and I
8 wasn't sure where I'd put my new baby, and so I wish
9 that we'd had this at that time. We launched this as
10 a pilot. We created a service to connect our members
11 to affordable childcare. The service was so
12 successful that now we're expanding it to every
13 family in New York City. All 8 million New York City
14 families will be able to access childcare they need
15 at a price that they can afford. It's very simple.
16 It's a mobile platform that's a one-stop-shop. One,
17 it identifies which financial assistance programs
18 families qualify for based on income, household size,
19 and child-- and their children's ages, and it does
20 this in five minutes or less. Next, it simplifies the
21 application process. It enables families to apply for
22 multiple programs with one single application and it
23 also comes in many languages to make it easier for
24 families. And then lastly, it connects families to
25 childcare providers throughout all five boroughs.

2 That includes our home childcare providers, pre-K
3 centers, 3K/Pre-K programs, daycare centers, and
4 after finding affordable childcare through the New
5 York City Childcare Navigator, 42 percent of the
6 users in the pilot reported increased household
7 income. Another 21 percent reported that a parent
8 was able to return to the workforce fulltime. We
9 will continue this service for the membership, and we
10 would love to partner with the City Council on this
11 newest initiative. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I have a few
13 questions. So, do you have an estimate of how many
14 teachers the \$150 million has so far been added for
15 additional class size funding would cover?

16 MARY VACCARO: From what we understand
17 that would be 3,700.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: That's with the
19 \$150, and if they needed they will continue to add
20 funding to that, right? Okay. Your-- as a CBO
21 childcare provider, how do you sign up to join the
22 website? How do we ensure that there's up-to-date
23 data, open seats and capacity for the New York City
24 Childcare Navigator? I saw it. It was pretty cool.

2 KAREN ALFORD: It is. It is pretty cool,
3 and when you go into the navigator-- like I said,
4 it's a one-stop-shop and as part of the website it
5 shows you which providers have vacancies. So that is
6 a portion of the program.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Does it also show
8 you where seats are available and what type of
9 payments?

10 KAREN ALFORD: It is income-based, and so
11 we are ready to launch. We are sure as with any new
12 launch there are going to be some hiccups, and so we
13 will keep adding information to it as we go along.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. You
15 mentioned there's a 4,000 shortfall in
16 paraprofessionals. Can you tell us how many
17 paraprofessional positions there are in schools and
18 how many are currently vacant? Paraprofessional?

19 PRISCILLA CASTRO: In terms of the
20 shortage, currently there's over a thousand
21 paraprofessionals that are needed, over a thousand.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, you have a
23 thousand vacancies?

24 PRISCILLA CASTRO: There's over a
25 thousand vacancies, absolutely.

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Cell
3 phones, do you have estimate on the cost based on how
4 many schools already have some sort of ban? Does
5 anybody know?

6 UNIDENTIFIED: No.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: CSA?

8 HENRY RUBIO: I can't recall right now.
9 I'll give you a ballpark number. Melissa and I were
10 trying to do it behind envelope math, not only for
11 the equipment, but also the additional staff that you
12 would need to collect them, and both the Chancellor
13 and I are very much in agreement that we don't want
14 our teachers doing it. We need them focused in the
15 classroom with students. And-- so Chair Joseph, I
16 can't recall if it was roughly-- her and I were
17 thinking it would cost us about \$25 million. But
18 again, we could get back to you with a number.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And how many schools
20 currently don't have any assistant principals?

21 HENRY RUBIO: We used to have 200. Now
22 we're down to about 50 schools in the City that do
23 not have an assistant principal, and Chair Joseph, I
24 have to say it is the-- I opened with it, because I
25 have to be honest, it is the one thing-- and I'm

2 literally getting goosebumps now. It is the one thing
3 that I and my members are losing sleep over. And if
4 I may add, just two weeks ago-- I was a principal of
5 a high school right here in Manhattan. I left there
6 I want to way about 2006. School has seven floors. I
7 used to have eight agents, seven and one-- seven and
8 one supervisor. That principal today on a good day
9 has three. A student was found with a gun there
10 about two weeks ago. What do you think is going to
11 happen to enrollment in that school? That principal
12 emails a superintendent if not every day, at least
13 once a week. Not enough, not enough, not enough, not
14 enough. So, it's the one issue that between our
15 safety agents and an AP, I think it's a high priority
16 for us.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So do you know off
18 the top of your head how many APs you need?

19 HENRY RUBIO: Fifty.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Fifty?

21 HENRY RUBIO: Fifty to cover those
22 schools, yes.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And your Dial
24 Teacher-- this enhancement would increase the
25 capacity? What would the enhancement do for Dial a

2 Teacher? Put on your mic so we can hear you on the
3 record. Thank you.

4 ROSANNE KNEUBUHL: It would provide
5 professional development for-- we are using
6 technology, and we would like to increase the use of
7 technology, because as the-- you know, as the title
8 Dial a Teacher is kind of like, you know. But we
9 would like that money for professional development to
10 increase the technology and to allow the staff to get
11 to know the technology and learn new ways of helping
12 the students.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And you're currently
14 serving K to 12?

15 ROSANNE KNEUBUHL: K to college.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: K to college.

17 ROSANNE KNEUBUHL: We have students who
18 started with us in second grade and have continued to
19 call us from SUNY colleges.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Glenys,
21 you still have to testify, please.

22 GLENYS RIVERA: Good afternoon, Chair
23 Joseph and honorable members of the Committee. My
24 name is Glenys Rivera, Second Vice President of Local
25 372, representing over 24,000 New York City education

2 employees including 8,000 school lunch workers. I
3 appear before you today to address the critical
4 staffing and infrastructure concerns tied to the
5 mayor's proposed educational budget. School lunch
6 workers play a foundational role in student readiness
7 by preparing and serving meals for over 900,000
8 children across the five boroughs. Last year's \$25
9 million restoration to school foods program was an
10 important step. However, without sufficient staffing
11 it is not sustainable. We respectfully request an
12 allocation of \$10 million to hire additional school
13 lunch workers. This investment will address current
14 staffing shortages, reduce the burden on existing
15 personnel, and ensure compliance with medical,
16 religious, and dietary protocols. Our members
17 routinely arrive early and stay late without
18 additional compensation just to meet the basic
19 requirements of the breakfast and lunch service. In
20 addition, we urge the Council to prioritize
21 ventilation and air conditioning improvements in
22 school kitchens. Many facilities, particularly those
23 built in 1990 lack proper ventilation, leading to
24 dangerous kitchen conditions that often exceed 130
25 degrees. These conditions compromise sanitation,

2 safety, and workers' health. We request that the
3 Department of Education and School Construction
4 Authority conduct a comprehensive evaluation of
5 ventilation needs across the public school kitchens
6 and the funding be designated for remediation. On
7 behalf of President Shaun De Francios [sp?] the first
8 and the members of Local 372, I thank the Council for
9 its ongoing support and respectfully urge favorable
10 consideration of this request to strengthen school
11 food services and working conditions across the City.
12 Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Joseph?

14 JOSEPH ALISIO: Good afternoon, Chair
15 Joseph, Chair Brannan. Sorry. Good afternoon, Chair
16 Joseph, Chair Brannan and members of the Education
17 and Finance Committee. My name is Jose Alisio and
18 I'm the Deputy Director of the Schools Division at
19 SEIU Local 32BJ. 32BJ is the nation's largest
20 property service union, representing cleaners,
21 property maintenance workers, door persons, security
22 officers, building engineers and school, airport, and
23 food service workers across the East Coast with
24 approximately 94,000 members in New York. I'm here
25 today to express 32BJ's support for the \$809 million

2 allocation included in the Mayor's Executive Budget
3 for the Department of Education custodial services
4 which if included in the final budget will fully fund
5 the NYCSS for fiscal year 26. As you know, 32BJ
6 represents the approximately 5,100 cleaners, handy
7 persons employed by the New York City School Support
8 Services. The hardworking men and women work under a
9 contract with the Department of Education to provide
10 essential school facility cleaning and maintenance
11 services. This allocation represents an investment
12 in the trained, cleaning and maintenance workforce
13 needed to ensure the safety of more than a million
14 public school students, teachers and staff,
15 particularly in Black and Brown communities that have
16 historically been underserved. Fully funding the
17 NYCSS for Fiscal Year 26 demonstrates the City's
18 commitment not only to these workers, but to the
19 welfare of our school communities. We ask the
20 Council to maintain the Executive Budget allocation
21 in the final budget that will be adopted for Fiscal
22 Year 26. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many additional
24 school food workers would you want to add?

25 GLENYS RIVERA: An additional 1,000.

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: 1,000.

3 PRISCILLA CASTRO: Hi, Chair Joseph.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Hi.

5 PRISCILLA CASTRO: Just wanted to
6 reiterate on the Intro 1261. In regards to the-- the
7 Respect Check is necessary. We have a great shortage
8 of the paraprofessionals in New York City. Our
9 students are not being served properly, our IEP
10 students, and like I said, it's over 1,000, 2,000,
11 3,000, 4,000. There's a lot of paraprofessionals
12 that's needed in New York City. So, this Intro 1261
13 is a great need.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I hear you. Thank
15 you.

16 PRISCILLA CASTRO: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, everyone.
18 The following students, if you can hear my voice,
19 Ahana Ira [sp?], are you hear? Ella Wang? Seaver
20 Chen [sp?], Ashwyn Lu-Heda-- if I mispronounce,
21 forgive me. We called four names. Are you missing?
22 Turn on your mic. Go ahead. What happened to your
23 classmate?

24 UNIDENTIFIED: He stepped out.

25 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: He'll be back?

1 UNIDENTIFIED: I think he'll be here
2 soon.

3 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, you may begin.

4 HANA IRA: Good morning. First, I want
5 to thank Chair Joseph and the rest of the Council for
6 allowing me to speak here today. My name is Hana Ira
7 and I'm a high school junior in Queens. I'm also a
8 youth advocate with the Asian American Student
9 Advocacy Project's Anti-bullying and Harassment
10 Campaign. AASAP is CACF's citywide youth leadership
11 team. To improve school culture and climate, every
12 school should have a restorative justice program.
13 The funding for restorative justice in schools must
14 be sustainable, not to disappear after one year, but
15 a long-term investment to ensure that student are--
16 students feel belonged and safe in school. In middle
17 school I didn't have any culturally restorative staff
18 that I could turn to for support or just to talk to.
19 I was one of the very few AAPI students of color in
20 my grade. I was constantly mocked, called racial
21 slurs, told my food smelled weird, and told that
22 eating with my hands was gross. I was even asked if I
23 was related to that one kid from the virus, referring
24 to a Chinese American student in my grade. These
25

2 comments weren't whispered. They were said aloud in
3 hallways, in my classrooms, often in front of
4 teachers and staff that did not care. I felt
5 invisible and ashamed. Eventually, I stopped going
6 to the lunchroom altogether because I couldn't handle
7 these comments and stares. I began eating in the
8 bathroom just to feel safe. Over time, this
9 isolation deeply affected my mental health. Without
10 staff that could actually understand my background, I
11 was left to believe that this normal, that staying
12 silent was the only option. And I'm not the only one
13 that experiences these instances. AAPI students
14 across the City face microaggression, bullying and
15 erasure, whether it's mocking our names, making
16 racial slurs, stereotyping us. They may not always
17 be violent, but they deeply impact our sense of
18 identity in school. I believe all students deserve
19 to go to school feeling safe, being able to learn and
20 thrive without fear and feeling welcomed. However,
21 that is just not the case. These hurtful and harmful
22 comments and judgements from both students and
23 teachers are rooted in misunderstanding and lack of
24 knowledge of each other. It is time for the City and
25 schools to address this with solutions that center

2 care, empathy and growth. I have seen what's possible
3 when students have the space to be heard and
4 supported. We're asking the City to fully fund
5 restorative justice programming, ensure that every
6 school has restorative justice coordinator. Our
7 campaign at AASAP also proposed several solutions.
8 First, training school staff to recognize anti-Asian
9 bullying and biases. Second, school must
10 intentionally create space for students to share
11 their experiences and feedback. Our voices must be
12 included in the process. Healing and justice takes
13 time, but students deserve more than reactive
14 discipline. We deserve to be seen, valid and cared
15 for. Thank you.

16 ELLA WANG: Good afternoon. First, I
17 want to thank Chair Joseph and the rest of the
18 Council for allowing this conversation. My name is
19 Ella Wang and I am a student at LaGuardia High
20 School. I'm also a youth advocate at the Asian
21 American Student Advocacy Project Mental Health
22 Campaign. Being at a performing arts school has
23 significantly affected my mental health. Due to the
24 competitive and demanding nature of school shows and
25 frequent auditions, I've fallen into a hole of

2 anxiety and self-doubt. I remember one moment during
3 a choir rehearsal when my choir director pulled me
4 aside and talked to me about singing a solo that I
5 have never seen or heard before. Immediately, I was
6 nervous. I struggled to produce the sound she
7 wanted. My anxiety only grew from there. I
8 constantly questioned myself. I felt a lot of
9 pressure trying to meet her expectations for me. I
10 kept my anxiety to myself because I felt alone, like
11 no one cared or would understand my emotions. In
12 addition to performing well academically, teachers
13 always had high expectations, and I was under
14 constant pressure to be better. As an AAPI student,
15 I felt like my teachers only saw me as someone who is
16 doing well in school, and did not care about my
17 mental wellness. As an AAPI student in performing
18 arts, I faced even more judgment from others, because
19 they were surprised that I was not in the math or
20 science fields. I felt alone and as if I had done
21 something wrong. Oftentimes, my friends and other
22 AAPI students who are also experiencing mental health
23 issues are ashamed to talk to others about their
24 feelings and struggle in silence, hesitant to share
25 their feelings due to cultural stigma. We would

2 pretend to be okay due to the fear that we would
3 receive judgment from them. These thoughts are a
4 reflection of common stereotypes amongst AAPI
5 students and we have no one to turn to when needing a
6 space to just talk. There are over 2,000 students at
7 my school and only two social workers, yet the two
8 social workers feel like a luxury in New York City.
9 Taking care of our mental health should not be a
10 luxury or wish list item. It is essential, and the
11 funding for mental health support should never be at
12 risk. We need to hire more and diverse social
13 workers. The recommended ratio between social worker
14 and student is one to 250, and we need the City and
15 DOE to make this a reality. The funding for mental
16 health support is not just hiring more and diverse
17 social workers, but it must include other areas such
18 as investing in student wellness programs and
19 intentionally collecting students' feedback as part
20 of the evaluation process. When schools are
21 addressing mental health we want the schools to
22 center students' voices and experiences. We need to
23 understand that mental health is more than the
24 absence of clinically diagnosed mental illnesses,
25 mental health is also the presence of wellbeing. We

2 as the school and the City take these problems more
3 seriously and fully support students' needs. We need
4 to recognize the diverse needs within AAPI
5 communities to not only improve mental health
6 wellbeing-- the mental wellbeing of AAPI students,
7 but to strengthen the entire school community. Thank
8 you.

9 SEAVER CHEN: Good afternoon. First, I
10 want to thank Chair Joseph and the rest of the
11 Council for allowing this conversation. My name is
12 Seaver Chen and I'm a student at Curtis High School
13 in Staten Island. I'm also a youth advocate at the
14 Asian American Student Advocacy Project's Anti-
15 bullying and Harassment Campaign. In my
16 predominantly white middle school I constantly heard
17 my peers say discriminatory things towards Asian
18 people. I was often in fear of being targeted.
19 Finally, my fear was realized when a classmate
20 directly called me a racial slur which bothered me
21 enough to report it to a teacher who then directed me
22 to other staff members. The staff tried to comfort
23 me by reminding me that the person who said the
24 remark towards me was going to move schools soon. I
25 left the office feeling just as uncomfortable with my

2 identity as I did when I arrived, and I wondered if
3 it'd overreacted. This made me feel increasingly
4 more uncomfortable with my Asian identity and I would
5 wake up some days wishing I were anything other than
6 Chinese. What I experienced is not an isolated
7 situation. Many AAPI students do not feel
8 comfortable in schools due to racially discriminatory
9 remarks as a consequence of stereotypes being
10 perpetuated through a lack of an inclusive curriculum
11 and culturally-sensitive staff. Students hear
12 microaggressions and passively racist comments every
13 day that have no repercussions. When a more severe
14 racist remark is reported, traditional punishment
15 like suspension will occur. However, this approach
16 ignores the root causes of the issue and does not
17 encourage those who caused harm to learn about the
18 negative impact they affected. As a result, students
19 will repeat discriminatory comments targeting the
20 AAPI community with no real understanding of the
21 depth of their actions. In my situation, my peer did
22 not learn and grow from the experience and the school
23 did not provide space for me to heal. AASAP's Anti-
24 Bullying and Harassment Campaign believes that
25 restorative justice will be an impactful and

2 meaningful solution to this issue. Instead of simply
3 punishing those who cause harm, restorative justice
4 promotes an environment where they can be educated on
5 the effects of their action so while not feeling
6 disciplined. In order to foster a more accepting and
7 inclusive environment in schools, we believe each
8 school must have a restorative justice coordinator.
9 This meaningful change will take time. Therefore,
10 the funding should be sustainable and protected from
11 being cut. Schools must be responsible for
12 addressing bullying and harassment with care instead
13 of blaming the students. Some schools have annual
14 assemblies on treating others with respect, but we
15 need more than that. All schools must have a
16 restorative justice coordinator to invest in our
17 sense of belonging and safety in school. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Do you
19 have restorative justice coordinators at your
20 schools?

21 SEAVER CHEN: For me?

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah.

23 SEAVER CHEN: I think I haven't seen
24 anything or it hasn't been known to me that we have
25 one in our school, and I feel like me learning about

2 restorative justice came from AASAP and I haven't
3 heard of anything in it in my school.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: have you gone to
5 look?

6 SEAVER CHEN: I've looked around, but I'm
7 not sure if I-- like all my classmates have not heard
8 of it, and I feel like it's not very known at my
9 school.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. What about
11 you?

12 HANA IRA: For me, I am one of the
13 student leader at Restorative Justice at my school,
14 but it's like being newly implemented. And although
15 it's supposed to be [inaudible] also like training
16 teachers, but a lot of teachers are not like very
17 positive about it. There has been like feedbacks
18 where they don't completely believe in restorative
19 justice. I have had conversations with them. So
20 it's still in the process and it hasn't been fully
21 implemented. But students are-- some of students are
22 going through trainings.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What type of mental
24 health services are available in your schools

2 currently, and what would you like to see added to
3 your schools?

4 ELLA WANG: Well, we do have two social
5 workers, and we also have other-- like, for example,
6 like substance abuse, like stuff like that that
7 affects, like, a student, like, a lot mentally, but I
8 think it's very important that we have more social
9 workers, more and diverse social workers. As I said,
10 the ratio is one to 250, and we only have-- we have
11 2,000 kids at our school and there's only two social
12 workers.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: It takes a long time
14 to see one.

15 ELLA WANG: Yeah.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. Alright,
17 thank you. Julius Valderrama? If I said your name
18 wrong, I apologize. Julius? Sama Moustafa? Cana
19 Layfield [sp?], Courtne Thomas? Talia Carter [sp?]
20 and Samantha Jimenez? You may begin.

21 COURTNE THOMAS: Thank you. Good
22 afternoon, Chair Joseph and members of the Committee
23 on Education. Thank you for the opportunity to
24 testify today. My name is Doctor Courtne Thomas, and
25 I'm the Executive Director for the Mid Atlantic

2 Region at Generation Citizen, or GC. Through our
3 community-based civics curriculum middle and high
4 school students are engaged in immersive civics
5 education where they take a hands-on approach to
6 identify issues in their schools or community. The
7 CG curriculum provides a rich learning opportunity
8 for students to conduct research on an issue of
9 importance in their communities, take action to
10 address it, and reflect on their learning experience.
11 This is problem-based and project-based learning.
12 Our curriculum educates students on how to interact
13 with and navigate local government and become
14 positive change-makers. Before joining GC I served
15 as an elementary principal in the Bronx with the New
16 York City Department of Education and a teacher.
17 Issues that concern young people are issues that
18 deeply matter to me. Thank you for your advocacy on
19 behalf of the New York City Department of Education.
20 Increasing the current level of education funding is
21 critical to preserving programming for our pre-
22 kindergarten to 12th grade students. In my previous
23 role as a principal in the Bronx, I saw firsthand the
24 heart-breaking adverse impacts budget cuts had on
25 students. My student's academic performance was

2 affected, attendance became a challenge and
3 social/emotional learning needs were not always met,
4 because the school was short-staffed. It budget cuts
5 persist, things could become even worse. At a time
6 when federal funding support is uncertain, New York
7 City has the unique opportunity to ensure our schools
8 are adequately funded and supported. While
9 Generation Citizen stands in recognition of the
10 administration allocating resources for financial
11 literacy and professional development skills, civic
12 education is an area that has long been underfunded
13 and understated as a learning priority. We at
14 Generation Citizen believe that public service and
15 civic engagement should be prioritized as a mainstay
16 of the educational curriculum. How can we expect our
17 students to be active engaged members of their
18 communities and responsible citizens if they don't
19 know how to interact with their local government. In
20 closing, I will now turn it over to Carina Layfield,
21 Sama, Julius, Sam, Talia [sp?]. Thank you for the
22 opportunity to testify and for your continued
23 support.

24 CARINA LAYFIELD: Good afternoon. Thank
25 you so much for the work that you do for our city and

2 for giving us the opportunity to testify today. My
3 name is Carina Layfield and I teach 9th and 10th
4 grade Global History at the High School for Health
5 Professions in Manhattan. This is my first year
6 teaching, and going into teaching I'd hope to find
7 ways to engage my student in civics, especially at
8 the local level. This year, my 9th graders worked
9 with Generation Citizen to complete a civic action
10 project in our school community. Students were
11 interested in bathroom and school cleanliness, school
12 violence prevention and combatting substance abuse.
13 Students spent weeks researching how to improve
14 bathroom conditions at our school, coming up with
15 solutions like air dryers, providing more trash cans
16 in the stalls for menstrual products and increasing
17 cleaning routines. However, each of these solutions
18 costs money. Increasing funding for janitorial
19 services and cleaning products can increase the
20 quality of student's schooling experiences. Some of
21 my students indicated that they don't feel
22 comfortable using the bathrooms at school because of
23 how gross they are. This is inhuman and our students
24 deserve better. Small steps like making sure
25 bathrooms are stocked and clean will go a long way

2 towards making students feel safe and comfortable at
3 school. But our students deserve so much more than
4 just better bathrooms. My school has a student
5 population of almost 1,700 kids. How many school
6 counselors do you think is adequate for 1,700
7 students? How many social workers. Our school has
8 six guidance counselors, meaning that each counselor
9 has a case load of over 300 students. I had a student
10 transfer into my 10th grade Global History class
11 halfway through the semester. The program had not
12 included history. Global History is not just a
13 graduation requirement, but also students make take
14 and past Global History Regents Exam in the spring.
15 Missing months of instruction is unacceptable and
16 should never have happened. Our students deserve
17 better and our guidance counselors need reduced case
18 loads to meet the needs of all students. Our social
19 worker, Ms. Cooper, is amazing at her job and has a
20 huge impact on our students, but she is a single
21 person and has over 1,700 students to work with. Our
22 students deserve better. We need funding for more
23 guidance counselors and social workers which would
24 help reduce chronic absenteeism, as counselors would
25 have more time to follow up with students who are

2 chronically absent to check in on them, to offer
3 support. Chronic absenteeism is defined as students
4 who miss more than 10 percent of the school year.
5 The city's chronic absentee rate was 35 percent last
6 year. It is unacceptable that two in five students
7 are absent for more than 10 percent of the school
8 year. A recent MIT study suggested that if school
9 quality improves, students are more likely to attend.
10 Increasing funding in schools can better the overall
11 student experience and reduce chronic absenteeism.
12 Our students deserve better, and what I've witnessed
13 at HPHS is just a microcosm of the rest of the city.
14 Thank you for all that you have given us, and thank
15 you for hearing my testimony today about why
16 additional funding is vital to our schools and
17 students.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: How many kids are
19 in your school?

20 CARINA LAYFIELD: Almost 1,700.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And how many
22 guidance counselors?

23 CARINA LAYFIELD: Thank you.

24 SAM MOUSTAFA: Good afternoon, Council
25 Members. My name is Sama Moustafa and I'm a 9th

2 grade student at the Highschool for Health
3 Professions and Human Services. Today, I'm not just
4 speaking for myself. I'm speaking for the children
5 who get belittled and don't know how to stand up for
6 themselves. I'm speaking for the students who sit
7 quietly in classrooms, not because they have nothing
8 to say, but because they've been shut down so many
9 times. I'm speaking for the ones who hide behind
10 silence, who can't find the words or courage to ask
11 for help. I'm using my voice for the students who
12 don't feel safe enough to use theirs. Bullying in
13 schools isn't always loud. It's not just fists or
14 insults, it's the stares, the whispers, the
15 exclusion. It's the being targeted for your beliefs,
16 identity, race, religion, or the way you look, and
17 it's the silence that follows. The feeling that no
18 matter what you do, you'll never truly belong. This
19 is real. The CDC reports that over one in five
20 student in the US are bullied and they're more likely
21 to suffer from depression, anxiety, academic decline
22 and even suicidal thoughts. I've seen it. Students
23 who were once fully of passion and energy start to
24 doubt themselves, lose focus and give up, not because
25 they don't care, but because they're hurting. And

2 too, they stay quiet because they think no one is
3 listening. That's why I'm here to speak up for those
4 who can't. Education isn't just about learning from
5 textbooks. It's about learning in an environment
6 where we feel safe, accepted and valued. So how do
7 we create safer, more supportive schools? It starts
8 with new investment in both people and programs.
9 Number one, fund more school counselors and social
10 workers. Students need trusted adults they can turn
11 to not just in crisis but for daily support. Number
12 two, establish peer mentorship programs. Students
13 who face bullying and overcome pain are some of the
14 best guides we have. Let them lead. My school
15 already has something like this. It's called Peer
16 Group Connection, or PGC, but we need funding to keep
17 it going and expand it to more schools. Number
18 three, require real ongoing anti-bullying training
19 for students and staff. A one-time slide show
20 doesn't build a safe culture. Consistent, effective
21 training requires resources. Number four, build
22 anonymous reporting systems that actually work and
23 protect students. Technology costs money but so does
24 silence. We need tools students can trust and that
25 takes investment. And finally, create student-led

2 equity and inclusion counselors in every school. We
3 know what our schools need, but we can't lead these
4 initiatives without instruction, support, and yes,
5 funding. Give us the tools and we'll do the work.
6 May is mental health awareness month. There's no
7 better time to show us that our wellbeing and voices
8 matter. We always say that students are the future,
9 but how can we build tomorrow if we're being broken
10 today? I'm not asking for perfect schools, I'm
11 asking for safe ones, for schools where kindness is
12 expected not rare, where differences are respected,
13 and where every student knows they belong. Support
14 us and we will thrive. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very
16 much. Grab the mic. You can push it over to you.

17 JULIUS VALDERRAMA: Alright. Good
18 evening, members of the City Council. My name is
19 Julius Valderrama and I'm a ninth grader at the HPHS,
20 the High School for Health Professions and Human
21 Services. I'm grateful for the opportunity to speak
22 in front of you guys, and you know, speak about the
23 education budget. I'm not speaking only on my behalf
24 but for every student who wants to learn, grow, and
25 succeed, but who always can't do that because of how

2 our schools are funded. I'm a little nervous. This
3 year I've had the opportunity to be deeply civically
4 engaged. In January, my classmates and I presented a
5 civic project of the New York City Bar Association
6 organized by Generation Citizen, and I also
7 participated in Mid Atlantic Virtual Youth
8 Roundtable, also organized by Generation Citizen,
9 where I joined students from across the region to
10 voice our concerns about [inaudible] issues within
11 our community. For personal experience and
12 observation, I can tell you that mental health is not
13 a minor issue. It's a crisis. Many of us are
14 dealing with anxiety, depression, trauma, and family
15 struggles, but there aren't nearly enough social
16 workers or counselors to support the student
17 population. Sometimes we wait weeks just to speak to
18 someone. And by then, it's often too late. Mental
19 health is deeply connecting to everything, academic
20 success, student safety, and overall wellbeing. I've
21 seen it myself. Students started acting out or given
22 up, not because they don't care, but because they
23 don't have the support they need. But it doesn't
24 just stop there. Also have to ask, why don't our
25 schools have stronger safety systems? Other than the

2 \$300 million already spent on School Safety Agents,
3 where's the rest of the funding to protect students
4 and staff. I've seen houseless drug-users camped out
5 beside my school injecting harmful substances and
6 even attacking members of my school community.
7 Students should never have to walk past danger to get
8 to class. We need better security, not just more
9 guards but real systems that make us feel safe. And
10 while we're expected to show up ready to learn, the
11 conditions we're walking to send a very different
12 message. Our buildings are crumbling, ceilings
13 leaking, bathrooms are broken, classrooms are
14 overcrowded with barely enough space to think, let
15 alone ask questions or get extra help. When students
16 look neglected it sends a message that we students
17 aren't a priority. Building repairs should not be
18 treated as an afterthought. If you were in our shoes
19 for even one day, you'd understand how hard it is to
20 focus on your future when the present feels broken.
21 All these issues, mental health, safety, crumbling
22 buildings, overcrowded classrooms are connected.
23 They shape how we learn, how we feel and how we act.
24 I've witnessed students become violent, disengaged,
25 isolated because of untreated trauma and unmet needs.

2 I've heard racial slurs and threats in hallways and
3 seen students shut down completely because they feel
4 unseen and supported. That's why I'm here today, to
5 ask you to pass a budget that treats mental health
6 not as a luxury, but as a necessity, to fund more
7 school counselors and social workers, to invest in
8 school safety that protects us beyond just police
9 presence, to finally prioritize repairs and learning
10 environments that reflect the value of our education.
11 While we can't always change what happens at home, we
12 can change what happens at school. If we invest in
13 the right resources, we could break harmful cycles
14 and start a new one, one of care, support and
15 success. Thank you.

16 TALIYA CARTER: Good afternoon. My name
17 is Taliya Carter, and I'm a ninth grader at the High
18 School for Health Professions and Human Services.
19 When I learned I had been selected to participate in
20 this hearing, I took the opportunity seriously. I
21 began researching how the education system works and
22 how the City's money is being spent. I was surprised
23 to find out that the education budget for the 2024 to
24 2025 school year is approximately \$40 billion. This
25 is a huge amount of money, but when I look at my

1 school and what students face every day, I have to
2 ask is it being spent where it's truly needed. At
3 HPHS our environment does not reflect safety or care.
4 Surrounding our school, students regularly witness
5 people under the influence of harmful substances and
6 living in unsafe conditions. School is supposed to
7 be a place where students feel protected, but
8 instead, we often walk through fear to get to class.
9 A portion of that \$40 billion should be used to
10 ensure the areas of our schools are clean, safe, and
11 free of harmful or threatening activity. But it's
12 not just outside our building, it's inside, too.
13 Many of our classrooms have mold on the walls and
14 ceilings, mold that can cause health problems like
15 allergies, respiratory issues, in extreme cases lung
16 cancer. Our school has a rodent problem. These are
17 the conditions we're expected to learn in. These are
18 the classrooms where we're supposed to be prepared
19 for our futures. This is not just unacceptable, it's
20 disrespectful to students who are trying to do the
21 right thing. Another serious issue I want to
22 highlight is the lack of mental support. At HPHS
23 there is only one social worker for approximately
24 1,667 students. According to the School Social
25

2 Worker Association of America, the recommended ratio
3 is one social worker for every 250 students. So, we
4 are way behind the standard. Students are struggling
5 with anxiety, depression, trauma and other
6 challenges, and we don't have enough support to help
7 us get through it. There's a bill, Senate bill S4217
8 that was introduced in the 2019 through 2020 session
9 to require full-time licensed social workers and
10 psychologists in every school, but where's the
11 action? How can one social worker possibly meet the
12 needs of over 1,667 students? It's unfair to them
13 and it's unfair to us. Mental health isn't just a
14 buzz word. It's a life or death issue. Suicide is
15 now one of the five leading causes of death among
16 high school students. I don't want any of my
17 classmates or friends to become just another
18 statistic. We have to act now, because every day we
19 wait we lose opportunities to save and support lives.
20 I ask you, use your power. Use your budget. You
21 have the opportunity to make our schools more than
22 just buildings. We need safe, clean and supportive
23 environments where students can thrive. The future
24 of New York City starts with its youth, and we're
25 asking for what we need, not for luxury, for safety,

2 wellness, and equity. Thank you for listening. I
3 hope you take them seriously, because the future is
4 sitting in our classrooms right now, and we are
5 counting on you.

6 SAMANTHA JIMENEZ BRAVO: Good afternoon
7 members of City Council. My name is Samantha Jimenez
8 Bravo. Thank you for allowing me to have this
9 opportunity to testify at today's hearing. I'm
10 currently a sophomore at Health Professions and Human
11 Services. I believe New York City schools have the
12 potential to set students up for success. However,
13 the budget is one of the biggest things preventing
14 this. Recently, I found out the total budget for New
15 York City schools is approximately \$40 billion. Only
16 6.7 percent of that money goes to utilities and
17 facilities. This simply isn't enough. I'm currently
18 running for future Junior President and I've come to
19 realization that the complaints throughout my grade
20 are the same. They all want the quality of the
21 school to improve. The schools can only afford trips
22 for two grades, freshman and seniors. Sophomores and
23 juniors are left out of the fun. No rewarding events
24 can make students lose motivation to stop trying in
25 their classes and attending school overall. The

2 plans I have for my school, making it more safe,
3 exciting and a welcoming environment cannot be
4 achieved if the New York City school funding remains
5 so low. The shortage of ink, printers, calculators,
6 and pencils are small details of my school that can
7 really impact a student's performance. Students have
8 come to me complaining about the shortage of school
9 equipment and the little amount of calculators they
10 have in their classrooms. They want something to
11 look forward to every day, even if it's something as
12 small as throwing a football to each other. They
13 want to be able to solve their own equation without
14 waiting for another calculator to be available. The
15 budget impact on the school's physical condition
16 speaks for itself: water fountains that don't even
17 work, laptops that have been broken for months. The
18 gym ceiling has tiles that sometimes fall apart.
19 Food on the stairs, the food we refuse to eat since
20 it's poor quality in our eyes. This issue
21 [inaudible] environment my school located in. The
22 vulgar graffiti makes me question why hasn't the
23 school done anything about this. Every day I walk to
24 school in fear, fear of the homeless who are under
25 the influence of drugs, fear of random men cat-

2 calling me, yet nothing is being done about student's
3 safety. By speaking here today I'm not only speaking
4 for my school, but for thousands of school across New
5 York City. The budget has more of an impact on
6 students than one may think. Although I could go
7 into more detail about it, I fear the amount of time
8 I have to speak today is not enough. The budget the
9 city provides public schools not only has the
10 potential to open more doors for students with new
11 programs and interests, but it can also change the
12 way students perceive school. School should be
13 viewed as an opportunity to succeed, not as a place
14 to worry if your classroom has the supplies it needs.
15 Only the budget New York City provides can change
16 that. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Well, thank you for
18 the future. You're the future. You're not now.
19 You're not the future, you are the now. So, thank you
20 for your testimony, heartfelt. We'll talk offline a
21 couple things I want to bring to your attention. But
22 would you say to another student who's thinking about
23 civically getting engaged, involved? Any one of you.
24 Not the teacher, though, just the students.

2 JULIUS VALDERRAMA: Before going to HPHS
3 I was never really civically engaged. I was just more
4 focused on going to school, but ever since I came to
5 HPHS it's been a lot easier. And I feel like it's
6 not necessarily about being born with the skills to
7 be civically engaged, but it's about just going out
8 there and doing it, and yeah.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I like that. Oh,
10 he's the spokesperson for the group?

11 TALIYA CARTER: So, before I came to HPHS
12 I was very quiet, shy, did not want to talk in front
13 of nobody, but definitely coming to HPHS has been--
14 the teachers push you. They push you to talk out
15 loud. They push you to want to communicate with your
16 peers. And yeah, I actually-- not too long ago, I
17 think in January I spoke to a Senator. She had come
18 to the school. She's also the spokesperson for our
19 district, District Two. I spoke to her about the
20 issues, some issues that I had mentioned today, and
21 I'm just waiting for the change.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Alright. I love it.
23 How do you plan to stay involved in the issues that
24 affect you and your community after graduation?

2 SAMANTHA JIMENEZ BRAVO: I feel like
3 before coming to HPHS, like, leadership and advocacy
4 was never really something I could see myself doing,
5 but now, even outside of school like during the
6 summer I took on a leadership program at Mount Sinai,
7 and I feel like that could add on to my passion of
8 medicine and my passion of just going to a college
9 where I could just make an impact on the world.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. We talk
11 a lot of-- you mentioned a lot of funding in your
12 testimonies, each and every one of you, and talking
13 about investments, right? So if your school were to
14 receive increased funding, in your opinion, where
15 would you put this money? Where would you invest the
16 money that you're requesting? Like, this almost \$40
17 billion budget, where would you put some of that
18 money? If I were to send the money to the school
19 tomorrow, where would you put it?

20 SAMA MOUSTAFA: I would put it for--
21 through social workers and more guidance counselors,
22 and also for bathroom cleanliness, and like, just
23 making school a better environment so us students
24 could feel more comfortable.

25 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Got it.

2 TALIYA CARTER: I would put it to the
3 food.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Food. Tell me about
5 the food. I get that a lot. I did a whole hearing
6 on school food before. Tell me about that.

7 TALIYA CARTER: I'm so sorry, but the
8 food, it's repetitive.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay.

10 TALIYA CARTER: Cheese sticks, it's
11 supposed to be mozzarella sticks. They're not hot.
12 They're cold.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay.

14 TALIYA CARTER: There's some times-- some
15 days we don't have fruit.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: No fruit, okay.

17 TALIYA CARTER: One day we had chickpeas
18 and bread.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Oh.

20 TALIYA CARTER: Yes. It does not fit the
21 nutrition that we need, and I feel like it's happened
22 multiple times. So, I would definitely try to put
23 some of that money towards the food.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Improving the food.

25 TALIYA CARTER: Yes.

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Improving bathrooms,
3 you said. Go ahead.

4 SAMANTHA JIMENEZ BRAVO: I agree, because
5 I remember there's been several days throughout my
6 lunch period where the cafeteria doors don't even
7 open, so students just have to go the whole day
8 without eating. And even if there is food, like, we
9 don't know what they're going to serve, and students
10 at my lunch table actually like started calling it
11 jeopardy since, like, every day is a new mystery for
12 what we're going to eat that day. And sometimes
13 like, we just use-- students use the food to throw it
14 around and do anything it, because we think like it's
15 inedible to us.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. Is there
17 advisory-- is there a youth advisory committee at
18 your school? Someone mentioned student government.
19 You guys have a student government? I'm going to
20 come meet with y'all. I'm serious about that. Going
21 to talk to my chief and get it on my calendar asap.
22 Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very
24 much. Okay, our next panel, Randi Levine, Marie
25 Moss, Leonie, Paula Inhargue, Gregory Brender, Sheree

2 Gibson, Tanesha Grant, Molly Senack. Okay, you want
3 to start? Just make sure your mic's on.

4 SHEREE GIBSON: Hi, good afternoon. Sheree
5 Gibson. Are we going to go down-- okay. Chair
6 Joseph, Chair Brannan, thank you for the opportunity
7 to speak with you today about the proposed education
8 budget. My name is Sheree Gibson. I'm a proud New
9 York City Public School alum, a high school parent, a
10 Citywide Title I parent leader, and education
11 advocate. I am pleased that the Fiscal Year 2026
12 Executive Budget includes long-term funding for a
13 number of important education programs that have
14 annually been at risk for cuts that we long advocated
15 for their permanent funding. Several were named
16 today. The ones close to my heart that I uplift and
17 show appreciation for their baseline funding are arts
18 programming, community schools, and high-impact
19 tutoring. Thank you. We are grateful. However, the
20 Executive Budget leaves several programs without
21 long-term funding, extending funding for only one
22 year, once again, creating instability and
23 uncertainty for student, families and the system as a
24 whole. With urgency, I am asking the Council to
25 include \$80 million in long-term funding for summer

2 programming in the final budget. This funding
3 provides our children with recreational activities,
4 arts, and field trips in addition to academic
5 achievement. For families like mine and for
6 thousands of others, summer programming isn't a
7 luxury. It's a lifeline. As a parent who benefitted
8 from summer activities myself, I know firsthand the
9 power of these programs. They give our children more
10 than just a place to go. They offer hope,
11 opportunity and a sense of belonging. We parents
12 want real peace of mind. Knowing our kids are
13 learning, making friends and building memories, not
14 left behind or left out. My own child participated
15 in Summer Rising for two summers. I saw the joy, the
16 growth, and yes, the challenges.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

18 MARI MOSS: Good afternoon. My name is
19 Mari Moss and I am the proud mother of three little
20 Harlem girls named Klea [sp?], Sophia, and Anya who
21 are growing up in New York City Public Schools. I am
22 a former Chair of the school leadership team at
23 PS175, a former private school teacher and a social
24 worker who supported Early Childhood programs like
25 Help Me Grow and home visiting nurse services. I

2 currently serve on Community Action Board for Region
3 Nine which allocates federal fundings. It's a
4 nonprofit and afterschool program in east and central
5 Harlem. Professionally, I've contributed over a
6 billion dollars in development across New York City
7 resulting in over 5,000 jobs and helping direct over
8 \$7 million in federal funding to Harlem last year
9 alone. Since 2017, I've come before this council to
10 testify about parental alienation in domestic
11 violence cases. While pursuing my Master's in Public
12 Administration I endured escalating abuse from my
13 then husband. I believe I could persevere for my
14 children, but I was blindsided when police, courts,
15 and school staff failed to protect us, instead
16 compounding the trauma. Parent liaisons and
17 principals extended the abuse rather than
18 intervening, violating my rights and causing lasting
19 harm to me and my daughters. In the face of this
20 adversity I want to thank Council Member Rita Joseph
21 for helping me gain access to parent/teacher
22 conferences despite my circumstances, and I also want
23 to thank Council Member Tiffany Cabán for her
24 leadership in accelerating access to housing beyond
25 shelters, and supporting access to capital which is

2 crucial for survivors trying to overcome financial
3 control that often comes with abuse. Through my
4 initiative letter of legislation, I'm urging this
5 Council to mandate trauma-informed training for
6 school staff, fund parental rights protections and
7 hold institutions accountable for how they treat
8 survivors and children. Let us protect not only our
9 budgets, but the families who count on this city to
10 do what is right for them. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

12 RANDI LEVINE: Thank you for the
13 opportunity to speak with you. My name is Randi
14 Levine. I'm Policy Director at Advocates for
15 Children of New York. We are pleased that the
16 Executive Budget restores funding for a number of key
17 education programs that had been supported by
18 expiring funds. While ensuring that existing
19 initiatives remain funded at their current levels is
20 important, simply maintaining the status quo is not
21 sufficient given the pressing unmet needs we see in
22 our work on the ground with families every day. We
23 urge the City to make the following additional
24 investments to address outstanding needs. The City
25 should at \$70 million to provide preschoolers with

2 disabilities with the evaluations, services, and
3 classes they need as more than 80 organizations
4 recently urged the Mayor to do, given the thousands
5 of preschoolers with disabilities currently waiting
6 for their mandated services to begin, a challenge
7 highlighted in a recent City Council statement at
8 today's hearing and one that AFC hears about on a
9 regular basis from New York City families struggling
10 to raise young people with disabilities and get the
11 help they need. \$3.75 million to enhance services at
12 school-based mental health clinics and better meet
13 students behavioral needs in schools as recommended
14 in the City Council's budget response; \$3 million to
15 expand the Immigrant Family Outreach initiative to
16 help meet the growing need at a time when changes to
17 federal policy make it essential for schools to be
18 able too communicate key information to families;
19 \$17.5 million to expand access to small group support
20 for students who need more help learning to read.
21 Families should not have to find lawyers to sue for
22 private tutoring, because our public schools are not
23 equipped to provide effective reading intervention to
24 students who need them, and \$450 million in capital
25 funding over five years to make more schools

2 accessible as recommended in the Council's budget
3 response, because accessibility benefits everyone,
4 and students, parents, educators, and community
5 members with physical disabilities should not be
6 turned away from any school because they can't get in
7 the building. We also join with the Coalition for
8 Equitable Education Funding in urging the City to
9 restore funding for Student Success Centers and to
10 baseline the important education programs that are
11 funded for one year only. We are grateful for the
12 support of the City Council. Thank you for the
13 opportunity to speak with you.

14 GREGORY BRENDER: Good afternoon. I'm
15 Gregory Brender from the Day Care Council of New
16 York. We're the membership organization of New York
17 City's childcare provider organizations. We want to
18 thank-- start with thanking you, Council Member
19 Joseph and Council Member Brannan and your
20 colleagues, for your leadership in getting so many
21 key funding streams for Early Childhood education
22 baselined including 3K, preschool special education,
23 and the School Day Plus pilot, as well as
24 restorations for outreach and for Promise NYC. The
25 main issue we wanted to really highlight, though, is

2 the continued staffing crisis in Early Childhood
3 education programs. DCCNY is proud to work with our
4 partners and organized labor to settle collective
5 bargaining agreements that will increase salaries for
6 the EC workforce in many city contracted community-
7 based programs, but the biggest threat to the
8 viability of Early Childhood programs remains the
9 underpayment of the workforce. In every type of
10 Early Childhood education, whether you're home-based,
11 center-based, you're receiving pay that's
12 significantly less than counterparts in public
13 schools, and this is a form of discrimination against
14 the workforce that is mostly women and women of
15 color. It also means that the people have the
16 skills, the knowledge and education to be great Early
17 Childhood educators cannot and often do not stay in
18 their roles because they cannot sustain their lives
19 with lower salaries. This situation is going to be
20 exacerbated and present an increased challenge in the
21 upcoming school year, because New York City Public
22 Schools needs to hire 3,700 additional teachers in
23 order to comply with the state's class size reduction
24 mandate. It's very likely that intentionally or not,
25 NYCPS will be recruiting from teachers, staff, and

2 directors away from the childcare centers working
3 under contracts with NYCPS. Childcare centers are
4 understandably strictly regulated. Health Department
5 requires that they maintain ratios of adults to
6 children and ensure that staff meets the
7 qualification requirements. Centers are not going to
8 be able to operate if they're understaffed, and may
9 be forced to reduce capacity or even close. We urge
10 the City to take further action to eliminate the
11 salary and benefit disparities that are driving
12 talented teachers and directors and staff away,
13 including expediting the payment of collectively
14 bargained salary increases to childcare center staff
15 and identifying new resources to increase pay for the
16 early care and education workforce. Thank you so
17 much for the opportunity to testify.

18 LEONIE HAIMSON: Good afternoon. Thank
19 you, Chair Brannan and Chair Joseph for your
20 persistence and your patience and your continued
21 engagement in this very long day. My name is Leonie
22 Haimson. I'm the Executive Director of Class Size
23 Matters. We are, of course, thrilled that more than
24 750 schools will get smaller classes next year, but
25 we continue to be concerned about all those schools

2 that are too overcrowded to lower class size. Part
3 of the law was to require a multi-year plan so that
4 all the modalities needed would be provided to
5 schools to lower class size, and yet the SCA
6 testified in March that 70,000 new seats were
7 necessary to meet the mandate in the law, and less
8 than half of those are funded. Of those funded,
9 nearly half are unspecified as to district or grade
10 level, which according to our view is contrary to
11 language in both the class size law and Local Law 167
12 which require great specificity about where schools
13 are needed and going to be built. Now, many fewer
14 seats would probably be needed if the DOE also agreed
15 to adjust enrollment between schools, between very
16 overcrowded schools and underutilized schools. As
17 you've heard from the panel before, very overcrowded
18 schools have a lot of problems. Not only are their
19 classes too long, but students become disengaged and
20 often feel like they do not matter. Whereas
21 underutilized schools could use more students. Not
22 only do you have a more-- a generous and sufficient
23 budget for things like art classes. Many of the
24 schools that cannot afford art classes, it's because
25 they're under-enrolled and underutilized. Now, one

2 of the other things that we're concerned about is
3 that even if you built hundreds of new schools, which
4 they do not plan to do, without any enrollment policy
5 that's aligned to smaller classes, you will never get
6 reduced class sizes at all schools. Because, for
7 example, in Chair Brannan's district there are two
8 new schools with many empty classrooms; neither of
9 them comply with the law. So, it really needs to be
10 a unified set of proposals and policies all geared
11 toward smaller classes. Now, the DOE claims that they
12 do not want to do this because they are responding to
13 parent choice and parent demand, but one of the top
14 priorities every year on the DOE's own surveys is
15 parents saying that they need smaller classes for
16 their kids, and there's a more recent survey that DOE
17 did for parents who have taken their kids out of the
18 public schools and asked them why. More than 80
19 percent said class size was an important determinant
20 in their decision. So, we know that parents want
21 smaller classes. We know that we need mor space in
22 those 500 schools that enroll about half of all
23 students, and we need a significant aligned plan that
24 provides the space and the enrollment policies at the

2 district level to achieve that. Thank you very much
3 for your time.

4 TANESHA GRANT: Hello and thank you,
5 Chair Brannan and Chair Joseph, for this important
6 budget hearing on education funding for Fiscal Year
7 2026. I'm Tanesha Grant, Director of Parents
8 Supporting Parents New York. I am also the
9 grandmother of four children who have special needs
10 and are on the autism spectrum. My oldest grandchild
11 is non-verbal and high on the spectrum. He's eight
12 years old and has been in a D75 school-- thank you--
13 with no AIM program. Often, the school calls my
14 daughter when my grandson has a meltdown. Their only
15 answer is to send him home. D75 schools do not have
16 the support he needs. In my neighborhood there is
17 only one less program. Please understand the toll
18 this takes on our kids not having access to these
19 programs, and it also weighs heavy on our families.
20 I heard the DOE talk about expanding capacity by a
21 little over 100 children in the next fiscal year.
22 It's not even the floor of what they need for access
23 to AIM, NEST and Horizon. Chair Brannan and Chair
24 Joseph, I have been an advocate on the front lines of
25 education for decades, way before my grandkids were

1 born. I have an experience in education and have
2 context in education, but still my grandkids don't
3 have access. So, we know parents that might not be
4 as knowledgeable as I am have children with no access
5 to AIM, NEST, or Horizon. One in 36 children are
6 diagnosed with autism nationally, and it's extremely
7 irresponsible on the Department of Education part to
8 not meet the needs of our students who are autistic.
9 We have money to pay the Chancellor over \$400,000 a
10 year, but we don't have the money to fully fund all
11 the services that our children deserve. Not only
12 does it take a toll on my grandchildren, but it takes
13 a toll on my daughter. I don't get to spend the time
14 that I need to spend with them, because I'm too busy
15 advocating for everything that they're supposed to
16 get. I thank y'all for your advocacy, and y'all know
17 usually I'm a strong one, but it's coming to the
18 point where we don't know what to do. Even us who
19 stand out here, we don't know what to do and where to
20 get these services. So, I really, when y'all think
21 about this budget, please think about our children
22 who are on the spectrum that are not getting the
23 education that they deserve. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all very
3 much.

4 GREGORY BRENDER: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, our next
6 panel is Jai Nanda, Esteban Ozuna, Javier Juarez,
7 Kyle Mowatt, and Ziad Quinones.

8 JAI NANDA: Good afternoon, Chair Joseph,
9 Chair Brannan, members of the Council. Thank you so
10 much for taking a minute to listen to our testimony
11 this afternoon. My name is Jai Nanda. I'm the
12 Founder and Executive Director of Urban Dove. I
13 started Urban Dove about 25 years ago working with
14 high school youth here in New York City. We now run a
15 network of transfer high schools for over-age, under-
16 credited students. We-- some of you have been to our
17 schools. You know our schools. We work very closely
18 with schools in the DOE. It's a great synergy between
19 us and DOE transfer schools. They take kids 17 and
20 over. We take kids 17 and under. All of our
21 students are over-age and under-credited. All the
22 testimony you heard today about social and emotional
23 health, it's double for kids who are over-age and
24 under-credited and disengaged in school. That's why
25 the Learn to Work program was created over 20 years

2 ago. The Learn to Work program provides grants to
3 community-based organizations. The money does not go
4 to schools. This is not a charter versus district
5 issue. The money doesn't go to the charter schools or
6 the district schools. It goes to community-based
7 organizations who then provide social/emotional
8 services, internships, college awareness, advocate
9 counselors, attendance coordinators to help over-age
10 under-credited students engage. It's an unbelievably
11 successful program, which is why 10 years ago
12 Chancellor Farina make sure that every single DOE
13 transfer school got it, but because Urban Dove Team
14 charter transfer schools-- are charter transfer
15 schools, we were denied this. It was a political
16 statement, but really the people you denied the
17 service to were the students that are sitting here
18 with me. We have over a thousand schools in our
19 network. We're asking the Council to please ensure
20 that charter transfer schools are included in any
21 future Learn to Work RFPs, and until that day comes,
22 and we don't know when that will happen, we are
23 asking the Council to please provide the funding for
24 those services and resources. You'll hear it much
25 more eloquently from the students that we brought

2 here. Again, in the essence of time, we've only
3 brought one student from each school, but we have
4 over a thousand students in our network, and you can
5 hear from them as to why these resources are so
6 critical. Thank you for your time.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

8 Z Aid QUINONES: Good afternoon. My name
9 is Zaid Quinones. I am 17 years old. I'm finishing
10 my second year at Urban Dove Team Charter School Two
11 in the Bronx, a transfer school for over-age, under-
12 credited students. I started my high school career at
13 Stevenson [sic] High School in Soundview, but I
14 struggled there and fell behind. It is a big school
15 and it was hard for me to get the help I needed. My
16 counselor told me about DOE transfer school called
17 Bronx Community that was smaller and could better
18 support me, because they have a program called Learn
19 to Work that offered a lot of services like
20 internships, college support and counseling, but when
21 I went there they told me I was too young and I could
22 not enroll. The DOE transfer school option was not
23 available to me, but I didn't want to stay at
24 Stevenson. Then I found out about Urban Dove, a
25 charter transfer school. They didn't care about my

2 age or credits. They accepted me, and I actually
3 love the school. I'm doing much better. It's not an
4 easy path, but I'm working hard and gaining
5 confidence in myself. But when I got to Urban Dove
6 and asked about Learn to Work I was told they didn't
7 have Learn to Work programs, because they are a
8 charter school which I don't think is fair. At Bronx
9 Community it would have taken me-- I would have
10 gotten experience with Learn to Work, but because
11 they won't and they don't have it, Urban Dove would
12 [sic]. It makes no sense. I'm still me. What
13 difference does it make which public charter school--
14 which public school I attend. All over-age and
15 under-credited public schools students who are
16 working hard to get back on track deserve the same
17 support. Thank you.

18 JAVIER JUAREZ: Good afternoon. My name
19 is Javier Juarez. I am 16 years old and I attend
20 Urban Dove Team Charter School Three, Queens. I used
21 to go to Long Island City High School, but it was not
22 a good fit for me, and I struggled. When I fell
23 behind, I was lost. The school has over 2,000
24 students. I tried to switch to a DOE transfer school
25 but they would not accept me because I was too young

2 and too few credits. UD Team took me right away. I've
3 had a great year, have earned more credits than I
4 would have at LIC, and I am back on track. With no
5 options in the DOE I am lucky I have found this
6 school. My teachers tried to explain to me the
7 difference between public transfer schools and public
8 charter schools and why they get Learn to Work
9 programs and we don't, and it doesn't make any sense
10 to me. We are public school students who have
11 chosen a transfer school because it was a better fit
12 for our needs. Urban Dove took me when the DOE
13 wouldn't. That's a good thing. Why am I being
14 punished for that? We believe that charter transfer
15 schools should be allowed to participate in the DOE
16 Learn to Work programs. We have been told that might
17 be happening in the future, but not next year. We
18 are asking the Council to step in and provide me and
19 my classmates with the same resource we would have
20 gotten through the Learn to Work program if we were a
21 DOE transfer school. Thank you.

22 KYLE MOWATT: Good afternoon. My name is
23 Kyle Mowatt. I am 17 years old and I attend Urban
24 Dove Team Charter School in Brooklyn. Like my fellow
25 UD students who spoke just now, I came to UD after

2 struggling at Benjamin Banneker High School. I am
3 finishing my second year at Urban Dove and I love the
4 school. I am on track to graduate and hope to go to
5 college to obtain my degree in business and finance
6 when I graduate next year. We have been told that
7 the DOE has promised us to include Urban Dove schools
8 in the next round of Learn to Work which we were
9 happy to hear. The bad news is that the next round
10 is still another year away, so what happens next
11 year? There are over a thousand students like me
12 attending Urban Dove schools throughout the City. The
13 supports Learn to Work provides counseling,
14 internships, and attendance support which have all
15 been proven to work. We need those things, too. We
16 are asking the Council to please step in and provide
17 the funds that should be-- sorry. We are asking the
18 Council to please step in and provide the funds that
19 should come from Learn to Work. We hope it'll only
20 be for next yar, and then the DOE will honor its
21 promise to include us in Learn to Work. But next
22 year, we need your help so that we an get all the
23 extra support that is so important for us to be
24 successful. Thank you for having me.

2 ESTEBAN OZUNA: How you doing? My name's
3 Esteban Ozuna. I'm 17. I started my high school
4 career at Facing history, but it was not as great.
5 It was not a good experience for me. I was fighting a
6 lot and did not have a good experience. Now I go to
7 UD Team Manhattan and it has been a way better fit
8 for me. I feel supported and I'm doing way better in
9 classes for the first time in a while I am-- for the
10 first time in a while I am enjoying school and
11 thinking about my future. You have already heard
12 from my fellow UD students about why we're here
13 today. Next year, we will be kept out of learning
14 program once again. Next year is a cruel year for
15 me. High school is really hard for teenagers, but
16 especially for those behind like we are. We need
17 extra help sometimes. Learn to Work was effective
18 because everyone knows this. Without being able to
19 get the program, we need the Council to step in and
20 be our champion. Madam Chair, you came to our-- you
21 came and visited our school last month and you saw
22 students working hard, putting in effort to get back
23 on track. Urban Dove schools [inaudible] trying to
24 get on-- to do right. We are asking-- we are asking
25 for your help, not your special treatment, just the

2 same resources any other of public school like us
3 would get over the city. We hope it's just for one
4 year, but one year could make a difference for high
5 school struggling students to get back on track. We
6 are the ones who are suffering. Please help us access
7 to support and we deserve so that we can reach our
8 full potential. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I love that. How
10 are you? You good? You still nervous?

11 ESTEBAN OZUNA: Yeah.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: It's alright. So you
13 said that DOE has communicated that you'll receive
14 Learn to Work funding in the next RFP, but that won't
15 be until next year. There's no RFP this year. Is
16 that correct?

17 JAI NANDA: That's what were told. The
18 next RFP will be for the 26-27 year, leaving us
19 without the resources next school year.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Correct. So what
21 did--

22 JAI NANDA: We haven't even seen the RFP
23 at all, but that's what we were told.

24

25

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: They're still
3 cooking it. What's the ask for-- you came to the
4 Council. What's the ask?

5 JAI NANDA: We did. So, if we were in
6 the Learn to Work program grants are approximately
7 \$350,000 per school. So, our grant would be about
8 \$1.4 million. We put in a request to the City
9 Council for \$1 million to serve all four schools in
10 our network. So, we're not even asking for the full
11 amount of Learn to Work, but we think it's a
12 reasonable amount to provide a thousands students
13 that we have with the services Learn to Work would
14 provide.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: They're also doing
16 an RFP because they didn't baseline the program.
17 That's why we always say baselining is so important,
18 and we urge them to baseline programs that aren't
19 baselined in the 2026 Fiscal Year. But thank you for
20 the great work. Gentlemen, thank you. I hope to see
21 you guys doing more work around advocating for
22 yourself, right? So it's important. So, thank you
23 so much for being here. I really appreciate it.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

2 JAI NANADA: Thank you for your time.
3 And come back any time any of you want to come to any
4 of our schools. Open invitation.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I'll bring Chair
6 Brannan with me.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Okay,
8 now we have Ngawang Sherpa, Albert Tai [sp?], Andrea
9 Alonso Rodriguez.

10 ANDREA ALONSO RODRIGUEZ: Good afternoon.
11 My name's Andrea Alonso Rodriguez. My pronouns are
12 she/her. I'm in 9th grade and a student at community
13 school in Bushwick with Make the Road New York. I am
14 also a Restorative Justice Youth leader at my school.
15 I'm here because I want to let the City know how
16 important Restorative Justice is in our school and
17 the students want the City to continue to fund
18 Restorative Justice and divest from school police.
19 While being an RJ youth leader, I've learned better
20 ways to communicate, how to be accountable for my
21 actions, and how to de-escalate conflict within my
22 peers. I have firsthand experience in seeing my
23 community at school grow because RJ had given me more
24 confidence to make new and strengthen my old
25 relationships. I've noticed in myself that I want to

2 come to school more and be more involved in my school
3 community. RJ has given me new ways to look at
4 language and how we use it in school. It is a
5 powerful tool that I'm learning to use. Restorative
6 Justice supports students instead of punishing them.
7 It helps address the root cause of behavior. It
8 keeps students engaged and teaches accountability.
9 RJ builds empathy instead of punishing students
10 behind with suspension. RJ has given me more
11 direction. I can see how RJ gives my peers tools to
12 succeed and build a better future. I believe that New
13 York City has an opportunity to be a leader in the
14 U.S. by investing in practices that support young
15 people and divesting from practices that criminalize
16 them. More funding for school safety officers does
17 not make us safer. It is so stressful to walk into my
18 school in the morning and I constantly hear screaming
19 and school security makes me not want to come to
20 school. I'm grateful for our RJ coordinator, because
21 I know I can come to her if I have a problem. I urge
22 City Council to fund Restorative Justice programming,
23 because students deserve to be seen, heard, and
24 understood. Students demand real safety. I have seen
25 that RJ can keep us safe. It keeps students engaged

2 in their education, reduces repeat offenses and
3 creates a safer, more supportive school environment
4 and by investing in RJ means investing in our future
5 of our young and community. Protect funding for
6 Restorative Justice in schools, move money from
7 hiring and training school police, and stop funding
8 for surveillance technology. By not hiring any more
9 school police right now, New York City could save up
10 to \$100 million in one year, and that money could
11 fund community-based, sustainable RJ approaches to
12 safety. Thank you for your time.

13 ALBERT TAN: Good afternoon, everyone. My
14 name is Albert Tan, and I am a senior at the Brooklyn
15 School for Math and Research and I'm also a youth
16 leader at Make the Road New York Student Success
17 Center at Bushwick campus. This fall I will be
18 attending Stanford University, and I have had the
19 opportunity to work with students from four schools
20 on our campus. Our Students Success Center has
21 become a safe space to talk about different issues
22 that my peers face. Being a youth leader means
23 getting to do what I love, helping people of all
24 kinds, no matter the circumstances. Coming from a
25 first-generation low-income background, I've

2 experienced what it feels like to want help but not
3 be able to get any. Guiding student one-on-one
4 throughout the college application and financial aid
5 process is a way for me to both learn and grow.
6 Despite receiving youth leader training this past
7 summer, sometimes I still fail to get every step or a
8 piece of information about the college process
9 correct. It's through hands-on work at the Student
10 Success Center that I get to fix my mistakes and
11 improve. There is a segregation of schools all
12 across New York City. On one hand there are schools
13 that are flourishing because of the excess amount of
14 funding they receive. On the other hand, however,
15 there are students like Bushwick campus that are
16 severely under-funded. This means we don't have
17 enough counselors to meet the needs of our peers and
18 the Student Success Center has played a pivotal role
19 in supporting those needs. SSC allows people of all
20 kinds to help shelter and information that they
21 otherwise wouldn't be able to access at schools
22 themselves. Peers all across Bushwick campus visit
23 the SSC every day, and it's not just the same faces.
24 Working here I see different people from all
25 backgrounds getting academic support, professional

2 development and wellness support. If the SSC failed
3 to exist, finding the same information that advisors
4 here specialize in would get a whole lot harder.
5 There's a bulletin board right at the entrance of the
6 SSC that outlines many different services that people
7 look at daily. Even to me, as someone who received
8 training, the SSC is invaluable in developing my
9 interpersonal skills. Here I feel safe to socialize,
10 ask questions and have deep conversations with my
11 advisors. The SSC is where I feel I have informed--
12 I have formed lifelong connections and have been able
13 to pass on knowledge to my peers on things that I
14 have learned about the college process. It is for
15 this reason and so many more that I urge the City
16 Council to ensure continued and expanded funding from
17 SSCs so that students can receive support for their
18 future. Thank you.

19 NGAWANG SHERPA: Good afternoon,
20 everyone. My name is Ngawang. I am a senior at
21 Brooklyn School for Math and Research and a youth
22 leader with Make the Road New York Student Success
23 Center at Bushwick campus. And then I'll be
24 attending NYU this fall. I am here today because I
25 would like to share my experience as a youth leader

2 and the importance of investing in Student Success
3 Center to ensure every student like me have the
4 support to get to college. As a student and a youth
5 leader I have personally experienced how the Student
6 Succes Center has changed lives. I have worked with
7 my peers guiding them through the college application
8 process, helping them land internship, gain access to
9 financial aid, and showing what it means to be in the
10 community with each other. Our SSC services are a
11 godsend, especially for our low-income students like
12 myself who cannot access resources at home. The
13 Student Succes Center has been lifeline for academics
14 and students struggling with mental health, family
15 challenges and overwhelming college application
16 process. Many students at my school are first-
17 generation college applicants. I know how
18 intimidating that journey can be, because I have been
19 in their shoes unsure where to start. Through SSC I
20 have received the guidance I needed, help choosing
21 colleges, writing applications, securing financial
22 aid, and preparing for interviews. More than that, I
23 gain leadership, communication, time management, and
24 team work skills that will serve me beyond high
25 school. The impact of Student Success Center cannot

2 be overstated. Without it, students would lose
3 critical resources and personalized support that
4 traditional guidance counselor often overwhelmed with
5 high case load cannot provide. If Student Success
6 Center disappears, many students will fall through
7 the cracks without the tools or guidance to navigate
8 their future. That is why I urge City Council to
9 ensure and expend funding for Student Success Center.
10 This is not just about today. It is about the future
11 of our community. Investing in Student Success means
12 investing in student's equity and the system that
13 ensures every student have a fair chance to succeed.
14 Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You mentioned some
16 of you can talk more about the service Student
17 Success Centers offer. Why is it so valuable to each
18 one of you?

19 ALBERT TAN: It's really valuable for me
20 because I get to learn things that I wouldn't
21 normally learn in a-- I mean-- in a high school
22 environment. So, when I was applying to college this
23 fall I went to many advisors. For example, I had Lee
24 Mida [sp?] look over my resume, and without her my
25 resume probably wouldn't be as polished, or I had

2 Dana look over my essays. And so with that, I was
3 able to send something that I was confidently going
4 to submit without feeling like I was missing a part
5 of that.

6 NGAWANG SHERPA: it goes the same for me,
7 too. While doing my personal statement for the
8 colleges, Barrett [sic] one of our advisors from
9 Student Success Center helped me with my student-- I
10 mean, with my personal statement, too, and then Myra
11 [sic] like Albert said, also helped me with my resume
12 which made it look more appealing to the colleges.
13 So, it's really meaningful.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Congratulations on
15 going to Stanford. What are you majoring in?

16 ALBERT TAN: I'm going to major in
17 economics.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. We need you
19 back in New York. So, thank you so much. You want
20 to add something?

21 NGAWANG SHERPA: No.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You're good?
23 Alright. Student Success Centers, as you heard
24 earlier is going to be funded internally, centrally
25 by New York City Public Schools, but we are going to

2 have a briefing on that, too. I want to see it in
3 middle schools as well. So, we will be doing that--
4 having that conversation. So, thank you all for your
5 testimony.

6 ALBERT TAN: Thank you.

7 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Hadig Ali [sp?],
9 Long Hui Jiang, Tatyahna Costello, and Kira Healy
10 [sp?]. Are you missing one other person? Alright,
11 you may begin. Okay, no problem. Whenever she
12 comes, she'll just [inaudible] no worries. Do you
13 want to--

14 TATYAHNA COSTELLO: Hi, my name is
15 Tatyahna Costello. I'm a staff member at the
16 Brotherhood Sister Sol. I am also a licensed social
17 worker. I've previously worked at a school social
18 worker, and I've also been a youth advocate for the
19 last 10 years. No, I'm not that old. I've just been
20 doing it since I was a youth. Transparently, this is
21 probably one of my least favorite parts of my job.
22 Not because I don't love the youth. It's not because
23 I don't see the good things City Councils are doing.
24 It just is really difficult to urge and beg for
25 resources while we all watch our youth suffer. I

2 recently was talking to one of my youth members and
3 she just looked at me and asked me like what's wrong
4 with me. You know, I don't have an answer for that.
5 I can tell her nothing's wrong. Like, I don't know
6 what's going on but there's nothing I can do about
7 the way the school system treats here. There's
8 nothing I can do about the relationship that she's
9 in. That's just not good. And I can't play a double
10 role as a social worker and also be an advocate for
11 her. I've also been in situations where I was a
12 school social worker and an eight-year-old tried to
13 take her life in the school gym. I don't know you
14 explain to the other students why she did that. I
15 know a lot about her history. I know that her mom
16 tried to also harm her. I knew why she tried to do
17 that, I just didn't know what to say everyone else
18 when that was happening. And so, mostly-- you know,
19 I have the statistics. You know, I have the degree.
20 I could say all those things, but I think most
21 importantly just wanting to urge that our youth need
22 help. They need more mental health support. They
23 need more Restorative Justice, because without it, it
24 isn't just about them not being suspended, it's about
25 their lives and their livelihood and if they do make

2 it out. So, just would encourage and urge y'all to
3 consider funding the Restorative Justice programs,
4 extending mental health support and really thinking
5 about the youth that I'm sure are in your lives, that
6 are in our lives moving forward. Thank you.

7 LONG HUI JANG: Good evening honorable
8 Chair and esteemed members of the hearing. My name
9 is Long Hui Jang and I'm a youth member with the
10 Coalition for Equitable Education Funding, Citizens
11 Committee for the Children and a student at the
12 Brooklyn Latin School in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.
13 Brooklyn Latin is one of the smallest specialized
14 public schools in the City, stacked in the Gaynor
15 building with two schools above us, and at Brooklyn
16 Latin we do not have a school-based mental health
17 clinic. And that is why I'm here today, to advocate
18 for baseline funding for the mental health continuum
19 in the Fiscal Year 2026 budget so that we can keep
20 the fight alive to expand these clinics to schools
21 like mine. It is no secret that we are in a mental
22 health crisis. In these clinics are where student
23 feel the most comfortable. They provide a space in
24 school where students receive counseling, and in this
25 long political darkness we are in, constantly makes

2 me and my peers feel safe. If I had a space where
3 students like myself can express their vulnerability.
4 Without these resources, schools often resort to
5 calling 911 in crisis situations leading to
6 unnecessary ER visits and hospitalizations, making
7 the situation even worse. By investing in these
8 clinics, it means that students get the right
9 intervention at the right time. Every day, stories
10 are being suppressed, especially under this
11 administration. Honorable Chair and members of the
12 Council, by restoring funding and baselining funding
13 to mental health clinics in the continuum we help
14 fulfill our duty, our duty to ensure that every story
15 of every child, every parent, every student of every
16 family is heard. By providing in-school direct
17 access to support and guidance stories are told. Now
18 is the time to hear them. Please, continue the
19 continuum. Thank you.

20 KIRA HA-HEALY: Good afternoon, Chair
21 Joseph. My name is Kira Ha-Healy. I am here as a
22 high school sophomore and as a youth leader of the
23 Circle Keepers, a nonprofit organization devoted to
24 Restorative Justice opportunities expressed through
25 art and music. I'm also here to talk about something

2 personal, something that I let linger in me for far
3 too long. For the past five years I had to deal with
4 the most traumatic events in my small life, the COVID
5 pandemic, the high rates of suicide in youth, and
6 slut-shaming and sexual abuse in eighth grade. But
7 even before those events, I had to go through over a
8 decade of being manipulated and dealt with severe
9 trust issues because I didn't feel comfortable in my
10 own home. And during those times I contemplated some
11 ideations-- the best choice of word. I contemplated
12 them for years, and they were bad enough to the point
13 where every time I headed to school I thought of
14 tripping off of the train station platforms and
15 letting the train splatter me all over the rails, to
16 the point where I wanted to run into the middle of
17 the street and let my body get crushed against the
18 pavement. And so, when I was given therapy in 2021 I
19 was finally given some kind of hope. I thank the
20 therapist who helped me throughout the past four
21 years, to the social workers who made me feel
22 comfortable in my school, and to the guidance
23 counselors who encouraged me to believe in my future.
24 If it weren't for them, I would have been six feet
25 underground four years prior to today. For years, I

2 wish I wasn't given such high expectations from the
3 people I grew up with. I wished I didn't tire myself
4 to the point where my bones hurt just to make one
5 person proud. I wish I didn't plummet my self-esteem
6 to the core of the earth just to lift up someone
7 else's, and because of the therapists, social
8 workers, counselors and mental health clinics we
9 have, I'm sitting here testifying today. I hope by
10 sharing my story I motivate someone else who is
11 struggling to ask for help. If every school had the
12 support I have, less children won't have to struggle
13 in silence, which is why we need to baseline the
14 funding for the mental health continuum in our
15 schools. If we give students the mental health they
16 need, the mental health interventions they deserve,
17 we will help our future grow stronger. We can give
18 them the chance at life they deserve to have. Thank
19 you.

20 HADIA ALI: Good afternoon, Chair Joseph
21 and members of the Committee. My name is Hadia Ali
22 and I'm a junior in District 45 where I've spent my
23 entire life attending New York City Public Schools.
24 I'm here today with the YA-YA Network and Dignity in
25 Schools Campaign to demand long term investment in

2 the programs that actually make schools safe,
3 supportive, and just, starting with fully funded
4 Restorative Justice. We're here once again because
5 the political realities are being used to justify
6 taking back the very dollars that our schools need,
7 even after our voices were leveraged to secure them.
8 The state budget has taken away potential increases
9 in foundation aid, and the Mayor's Executive Budget
10 proposes limited one-year funding for programs that
11 students have been demanding for years. Each time
12 genuine changes seems within reach, we're reminded
13 that it could still be revoked and that equity is
14 treated as a privilege not a right. And when
15 officials debate numbers behind closed doors, it's
16 our students who feel the consequences every single
17 day. I'm here to remind you just how critical stable
18 long-term funding for schools in communities like
19 mine where schools already operate on the margins and
20 feel every dollar lost. While we continue to fight
21 for what our schools deserve, I want to take a moment
22 to recognize the small wins in this year's Executive
23 Budget. Baselining \$6 million for Restorative
24 Justice and funding for mental health support and
25 immigration communications is a step forward and

2 signals that our voices are finally reaching you, but
3 that funding only secures support for schools that
4 already have Restorative Justice programs, not for
5 schools like mine where Black and Brown students are
6 suffering the most from the exact issues that these
7 programs are meant to address. So, what does that
8 say about who we're choosing to leave behind.
9 Surely, we can't be funding equitable education if
10 only a select group of students get access to these
11 programs. So, hearing us isn't enough. This moment
12 calls for a durable commitment that matches the
13 urgency that we live with. Amid the attacks on public
14 education from the Trump administration, we need
15 reassurance that these life-changing programs will
16 not merely survive the next budget cycle, but be
17 expanded. So, while I acknowledge the steps in this
18 year's Executive Budget, students deserve more than
19 half-way measures and temporary fixes. We need
20 consistent investment, not just when it's politically
21 convenient, because students are not bargaining chips
22 in the annual struggle over the City's budget. We're
23 young people trying to survive in a system that
24 treats us like we're the problem instead of asking
25 why it keeps failing us. So, I'm asking you, don't

2 settle half-way. Fully fund Restorative Justice,
3 invest in the support systems students actually need,
4 and show us through action not words that they are
5 worth the full investment. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Can you talk about
7 the kind of mental health services that are currently
8 available at your schools? You brought that up when
9 you were talking.

10 LONG HUI JANG: Yeah, thank you for the
11 question. So here at Brooklyn Latin we do have a
12 counseling department. We are a fairly small school
13 so we have-- do have mental health support from our
14 counselors, but given that we have a limited number
15 of our counselors and not a mental health clinic,
16 when students feel like they need help, they don't
17 really have a place to go, especially when counselors
18 are more focus-- are also dealing with college
19 counseling as well as-- in addition to mental health
20 counseling. And also, the fact that not many people
21 feel comfortable going to their counselors because
22 they haven't had that relationship, or students at my
23 school don't feel comfortable sharing to people that
24 they haven't met before or haven't had that
25 relationship. So, having a clinic that's specially

2 designed to make you feel safe, make you feel
3 comfortable, that's critical to help making sure that
4 our students and myself feel like they're not alone
5 in this world which is getting increasingly,
6 increasingly dark.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: It is. Thank you
8 for each and every one of your testimonies today.
9 You're the reason why I work so hard and fight so
10 hard for every single thing that you guys deserve.
11 Deserve nothing less than the best. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all very
13 much. Okay, next panel: Destiny Jimenez, Avery
14 Severe, Ibel Nunez, Janice Chong [sp?], Lamisha
15 Tasnim [sp?], Mariama Jallow, Nuha Chowdhery [sp?],
16 Edward Sanchez. Okay, who wants to start?

17 IBEL NUNEZ: Good afternoon, Chair Joseph
18 and Committee Members. Thank you for having me here.
19 I am Ibel Nunez, a high school junior from District
20 Seven. I am here with the YA-YA Network and Dignity
21 in Schools to thank you all for the efforts you have
22 made towards Restorative Justice and reminding you of
23 all the work that we still need to do. We understand
24 that the [inaudible] status of our current political
25 climate are limited, but that doesn't mean that these

2 practices should be neglected. Restorative Justices
3 practices have been a pillar in my community, from
4 exciting events to peer mediation programs at my
5 school students have taken advantage of daily. These
6 practices aren't just a different way to discipline
7 students. It's building community resources and bonds
8 so strong that when a problem does arise, we are
9 there to support the student when they fall back on
10 us. It's a way to understand the issues students are
11 facing in preventing these issues. [inaudible]
12 harmful punishments like suspensions that only take
13 away learning time from the students. At the
14 beginning of the school year, I had to mediate a
15 situation between a small friend group of four
16 students. This dispute resulted in two getting
17 suspended. So, when they came back to classes as
18 part of the program, we decided to have discussions
19 with them while we mediated them. We had discussions
20 about their issues in front of a counselor so we
21 could get them back into their regular schedule with
22 a new page. Unfortunately, we only met twice. Out
23 of the five to eight meetings we were supposed to
24 have, you may wonder why, why did this happen, but to
25 my peers this concept is not foreign. My counselor

2 was busy, not with regular work, but with three other
3 different groups who had the same situation.
4 Ultimately, she decided to move on our time to other
5 students, deeming the first group as not an
6 emergency. [inaudible] And you want to know what
7 happened to this non-emergency group? Three got
8 suspended and the other one had to have a safety
9 transfer. This issue wasn't about students not
10 getting enough discipline. It was about having--
11 giving them a safe space so they can have a moderated
12 discussion while figuring out their problems. And
13 you best believe I made this point clear to my
14 counselor, but to her response, I quote, "It was-- in
15 the first two meetings they did pretty well." But
16 well isn't enough. These practices work. We need
17 them to have time and dedication to both structures.
18 As I ask my counselor, I ask you not to see these
19 practices as a one-time thing, but embrace them, not
20 just a way to make yourself look more progressive,
21 but actively heal and restore learning environments,
22 not just for me, but for the many students who will
23 walk these hallways I call my own [sic]. But in
24 order for this to happen, we need to continue
25 advocating and actively fighting for these programs.

2 They can't be the first to be brought up when budget
3 cuts are mentioned. We need these programs and
4 initiatives. We see the work-- we see that they
5 work. So, why should they be jeopardized when budget
6 cuts arises. I understand that just like counselor
7 you have a million things to do and you're under
8 pressure from all sides of the table, but I beg of
9 you, keep making sure that our voices are heard and
10 that Restorative Justice isn't just brushed under the
11 rug every time a budget cut arises.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Go
13 ahead. How are you?

14 MARIAMA JALLOW: I'm good.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: You ready to go?
16 Just hit the little silver button.

17 MARIAMA JALLOW: I turned it on and then
18 I turned it off. Hello, my name is Mariama Jallow. I
19 am a junior and I go to the same school as Ibel,
20 District Seven. Today I'm with the YA-YA Network and
21 Dignity in Schools to talk about the importance of
22 Restorative Justice and why there should be more
23 funding, because I know you guys gave \$6 million in
24 baseline for one year, and I'm also a member of the
25 Restorative Justice Club in my school, and I see a

2 lot of changes from when I first started to now. At
3 first, when I was in the club I saw a lot of planning
4 for certain events, planning for certain, like-- just
5 bonding experiences for certain grades even though we
6 don't have that. We don't have like the right
7 community or the right discussion with the whole
8 school about how-- excuse me. I'm sorry-- about how
9 we want to keep our students really connected
10 together. And even in the club itself I see that we
11 don't have a trained Restorative Justice supervisor
12 to keep the club running together. We struggle to
13 find a classroom to even go inside to talk about
14 Restorative Justice at all, and it doesn't really
15 function as regularly as I thought it did when I
16 first was introduced and recruited into the club.
17 Also, when I tried to cater a Restorative Justice
18 circle, it didn't really feel as safe to me, and so
19 it's really important that we expand and push to the
20 \$12 million that we ask for, for Restorative Justice.
21 Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very
23 much.

24 EDWARD SANCHEZ: Thank you for the
25 opportunity to speak with you. My name is Edward

2 Sanchez. I'm a CUNY Political Science student at
3 Baruch College, a recent graduate of New York City
4 Public Schools, Fort Hamilton High School, and a
5 youth leader at Citizens Committee for Children of
6 New York. I'm testifying today on behalf of the
7 Coalition for Equitable Education Funding, a group of
8 more than 120 organizations advocating for the
9 resources needed to ensure every student receives a
10 high-quality education with a focus on those who need
11 the most support. We are pleased that the Fiscal
12 Year 2026 Executive Budget includes long-term funding
13 for a number of important education programs that had
14 been at risk of cuts due to expiring city funding,
15 including 3K, Preschool, special education classes,
16 arts programming, community schools, tutoring, and
17 many more. However, the Executive Budget leaves out
18 student Success Centers entirely. So, this program
19 is still at risk and needs continued support. We
20 know that the Student Success Centers they train and
21 support youth leaders on how to guide their peers
22 through the college admissions process, providing
23 crucial supports to students at more than 30 high
24 schools. Additionally, the Executive Budget leaves
25 several important programs without long-term funding,

2 opting instead to extend their funding for one year
3 only, creating uncertainty for the communities they
4 serve and that they need. Programs that receive
5 funding for one more year only are therefore at risk
6 getting cut in 2026, including summer programming to
7 provide students with recreation activities, arts and
8 field trips, in addition to academic enrichment,
9 learning to work programs to provide support to over-
10 aged under-credited students to help them earn a high
11 school diploma and develop a post-secondary plan,
12 Restorative Justice programs to help students stay in
13 school and resolve conflicts instead of being
14 suspended, the mental health continuum to help
15 provide mental healthcare to student at 50 schools,
16 outreach efforts to help ensure families are aware of
17 Early Childhood programs, and immigrant family
18 outreach to help families receive information about
19 their child's school in a language and mode they can
20 access. We call on the City to baseline funding for
21 these programs in the final Fiscal Year 2026 budget
22 and make additional investments that are needed to
23 support students, especially those who have the
24 greatest needs. The Coalition thanks the City
25 Council for your strong support and continuing

2 essential education programs. Thank you for the
3 opportunity to testify. I'll be happy to answer any
4 questions you may have, and I also personally want to
5 thank Council Member Justin Brannan. I'm a
6 constituent. I live in Bay Ridge, so hopefully you
7 get to help out and support what the constituents
8 wants and needs.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very
10 much.

11 AVERY SEVERE: Good afternoon, Council
12 Finance Chair Brannan. My name is Avery Severe. I'm
13 a junior in high school and I attend Urban Academy
14 Laboratory High School which is a member of the New
15 York Performance Standards Consortium. Thank you for
16 giving me the chance to explain how important funding
17 is for affinity partners like the Consortium to New
18 York City students. I attended a Regents-based
19 school in ninth grade, and one time my English
20 teacher told me that I wrote a really, really good
21 essay, but I couldn't get a good grade on it because
22 it wasn't Regents style writing, and that just-- that
23 sent me down, you know. It made me feel less
24 confident in the education I was getting, because I
25 came from a place where were more focused on like

2 honing a personal voice in our writing, and I was
3 getting told I couldn't have a personal voice in my
4 writing, so I had to get out of that school. I just--
5 I didn't like where it was going so, I left, and I
6 transferred to a school in the Consortium. I came to
7 Urban Academy which was very alternative to the
8 school that I was coming from, and like all other
9 schools in the Consortium, Urban uses performance-
10 based assessments or PBAS [sic] in place of the
11 Regents exams to graduate. And in other Consortium
12 schools, students are in control of their graduation
13 projects, what topics and questions they will explore
14 and with the support of their teachers they do
15 projects like these for every discipline, so like
16 math, science, English, social studies, even art.
17 There's a library proficiency at my school where we
18 get familiar with library science. Since being at a
19 Consortium school, I'm more excited about learning
20 and less jaded about being assessed, and without the
21 Regents looming over my head, I get to spend more
22 time working on, like, essays and projects and art
23 that truly reflect how I interpret what I'm learning
24 in school, and I'm less scared of messing up, and I'm
25 more prepared to tackle big topics, because I know

2 that genuine learning takes trial and error, and
3 genuine learning doesn't mean what will get me a good
4 grade on the Regents. Like, curating all these
5 projects is really, really hard, but it just-- it
6 makes me feel more prepared for life after high
7 school, and I think that every student in New York
8 deserves the opportunity to feel more prepared, and I
9 know from speaking to my friends that still attend
10 Regents-based schools that they don't necessarily
11 feel that and a lot of people wish that they had the
12 opportunity to learn at a Consortium school, but
13 there isn't one, like, in every neighborhood, in
14 every borough, yada, yada. But the Regents aren't
15 for everybody and Consortium schools offer an option
16 for students that learn differently. Thank you for
17 listening to me to talk today. I'm so sorry I went
18 over time, but I care a lot about these schools.

19 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all very
20 much. Okay, our next panel: Esperanza Vasquez,
21 Chauncy Young, Sada [sic] Mitchell-- sorry, I can't
22 read it-- Eman Gad, Yeray Castano, Victoria Jiang.

23 ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [speaking Spanish]

24 TRANSLATOR: Good afternoon City Council.
25 My name is Esperanza Vasquez, and I am the mother of

2 two children. I have been a parent leader with the
3 New Settlement Parent Action Committee, PAC, since
4 2001. Although I was born in Mexico, both of my
5 children were born in the Bronx, and they went to
6 school is District Nine. My oldest son is currently
7 in college, and my youngest recently graduated from
8 high school on the New Settlement Community campus.

9 ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [speaking Spanish]

10 TRANSLATOR: New Settlement Parent Action
11 Committee is a parent-led organization that has been
12 working with parents and schools in the Bronx since
13 1996. Our guiding or our main guiding principle for
14 PAC is that every child deserves a quality education.

15 ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [speaking Spanish]

16 TRANSLATOR: We understand that we cannot
17 work isolated in our communities in our schools in
18 the Bronx and that working for a change, it requires
19 that our communities throughout the whole city of New
20 York and the state of New York get together and
21 demand a change. That's why I'm here today.

22 ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [speaking Spanish]

23 TRANSLATOR: PAC is a member organization
24 in many coalitions, the Healing Centered Schools
25 Campaign, the New York City Coalition for Educational

2 Justice, the Dignity in Schools Coalition, and New
3 Yorkers for Racially Justice Public Schools.

4 ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [speaking Spanish]

5 TRANSLATOR: As an organization of
6 immigrants and Black and Latinx families, we ask the
7 New York City to do more for schools and our families
8 and invest in healing and supporting our students and
9 not unjustly punishing them and suspending students
10 who are in crisis.

11 ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [speaking Spanish]

12 TRANSLATOR: A budget is a moral
13 document, and how we spend our city's funding
14 matters.

15 ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [speaking Spanish]

16 TRANSLATOR: We need to employ more
17 student counselors and social workers to support
18 student's social/emotional health and we need to stop
19 deploying policeman in our schools or using metal
20 detectors.

21 ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [speaking Spanish]

22 TRANSLATOR: We need to use Restorative
23 Justice techniques and to stop treating our children
24 like they were criminals, and we need solutions not
25 suspensions.

2 ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [speaking Spanish]

3 TRANSLATOR: New York City should invest
4 in healing and not invest in more harm.

5 ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [speaking Spanish]

6 TRANSLATOR: We need a fair budget for
7 New York City. Thank you very much for the
8 opportunity today.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

10 CHAUNCY YOUNG: Good afternoon honorable
11 Chair Joseph and New York City Council Members. My
12 name is Chauncy Young and I'm a Bronx parent living
13 in the Highbridge neighborhood of the Bronx. I'm the
14 Director of the New Settlement Parent Action
15 Committee. As Esperanza mentioned, we're a member of
16 many organizations, including all that she mentioned,
17 and also the Coalition for equitable education
18 funding. Our members are extremely concerned about
19 the state of the New York City Public Schools and are
20 advocating for equitable funding, both here in the
21 City and we also advocate at the state level with
22 some frustration at the situation that we landed on
23 the state level in terms of funding. Now, New York
24 City is put in the position where we need to invest
25 more in our cities and in our schools and our

2 families and invest-- we need them to invest in the
3 social/emotional support for our students and
4 families. Students and families need trauma-
5 responsive care and culture-responsive healing center
6 practices. Our schools need to be provided with
7 support and guidance to help develop trauma response
8 of healing centered schools. We also need to address
9 that New York City is a sanctuary city and that our
10 city should be safe and sanctuary for immigrant
11 families and not cooperate with ICE. It is an
12 outrage that New York City's higher education
13 institutions have not been sanctuaries for its
14 students, as we've seen at Columbia and NYU. These
15 institutions have opened their doors to ICE and have
16 disciplined and expelled student activists. We hope
17 with the support and guidance of New York City
18 Council the public schools remain a safe space for
19 all students regardless of their immigration status.
20 We should be investing in our future, not furthering
21 the cradle to prison pipeline. New York City
22 continues to undermine Restorative Justice, a program
23 that could use additional funding to train young
24 adults to be school-based Restorative Justice
25 coordinators. We also join the Coalition calling for

2 the City to restore \$3.3 million in Student Success
3 Centers and baseline funding for summer program,
4 learning to work, and Restorative Justice. Thank
5 you.

6 EMAN GAD: Hello, good afternoon, Chair
7 Joseph, Chair Brannan and members of the committee,
8 the joint committee. My name is Eman Gad and I'm the
9 Policy Coordinator at Girls for Gender Equity. GGE
10 Offers this testimony today because the funding we
11 receive is imperative to the development and growth
12 of Black girls and gender-expansive youth of color
13 across New York City. We request continued support
14 from City Council for our FY26 youth programming in
15 the amount of \$350,000 from the Young Women's
16 Initiative, \$200,000 from the Domestic Violence and
17 Empowerment Initiative, \$100,000 from the Sports
18 Training and Role Models for Success Initiative, and
19 \$250,000 from the Alternatives to Incarceration
20 funding. Through this GGE will continue to address
21 the needs of young people across all five boroughs
22 and expand its reach. The time to invest in our
23 youth is now. As you've already heard firsthand from
24 the numerous testimonies, young people are in
25 desperate need of support. Since the pandemic there

2 has been a youth mental health crisis. Increased
3 loneliness and isolation in this highly digital world
4 has left young people, particularly Black and Latin
5 girls without the social support they need. This is
6 where GGE steps in. Our programs are a safe space
7 for New York City youth, and while I cannot describe
8 each programming detail right now because of time
9 constraints, I can tell you more about our Young
10 Women's Advisory Council, also known as YWAC, which
11 GGE seeks to expand with your increased support.
12 Born out of the Speaker's Young Women Initiative,
13 YWAC develops young women into leaders by exposing
14 them to political education, civic engagement and
15 youth organizing strategies. In the past year our
16 youth learned how to testify, host community events
17 and conduct digital activism. They even learned
18 different public service career pathways during our
19 City Council Shadow Day in February which many of you
20 actually participated in. We hope that Council
21 supports our modest \$350,000 request to expand YWAC's
22 curriculum and foster further collaborations with
23 partner organizations and this council in addition to
24 the other requests detailed more in our written
25 testimony. Through these requested appropriation

2 Council can reaffirm its commitment to Black girls
3 and gender-expansive youth of color by supporting our
4 life-saving programs, especially at this dire time
5 when funders are shying away from investments towards
6 racial justice and DEI programming. Remember, when
7 New York City invests in its young people, it invests
8 in its future. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

10 CHAPLAIN SANDRA MITCHELL: Blessings to
11 you all. I am so always flabbergasted when I stand
12 before you, because I've never seen a City Council--
13 I've never seen leaders meet lead [sic] this before
14 in my 60 years, never. You're awesome. You're
15 making things happen. You're our legacy in the
16 making. Thank you. My name is Chaplain Sandra
17 Mitchell, and I am Harlem-born, Bronx raised, single-
18 parent mother at 15 years old. There were programs
19 in place, pilot programs for middle schools. We got
20 to check what programs we wanted. They gave us the
21 power to decide what classes we want. They did that
22 because attention span was just nil. We weren't
23 interested. We weren't engaged, and attendance was
24 horrible. So we had classes like advanced algebra,
25 calculus, humanities, and we got to learn about

2 different people in different parts of the world, and
3 it was awesome. We need to bring pilot programs back
4 again. My school, I look at Pace University. I love
5 coming down here and I love seeing you in your power,
6 exercising your power to make things happen for us,
7 for me. I will be returning back to school because of
8 you. It's your fault. I'm going to get that
9 teacher's license. I had the chance to teach at
10 Roberto Clemente Elementary School, and Susie B.
11 McKinnley [sp?] School. They were themed as Bay-bay
12 [sic] kids. You can't teach them anything. You want
13 to go and try? I did, and the children, they tried
14 to give me hell, but I gave them love and respect. I
15 believe in our education system, because I'm a public
16 school recipient, and my teachers let me know that I
17 can do it. My colleagues have said everything that I
18 wanted to say, so I just wanted to tell you this,
19 leave you with this. When I was 10 years old, my
20 social studies teacher told us that all Black and
21 Brown African-Americans, people of color, children of
22 color are descendants of savages. He set the fire on
23 me. He should have never said that. I went to mama.
24 I said mama, you got to tell him a piece of your
25 mind. She said, no, you're making a big thing out of

2 something, just wanted me to cool it down. And I
3 tossed and turned. We didn't go to church. We
4 didn't have a Bible, but I said God, if you're real,
5 just tell me what to say to that man. So, I cross-
6 examined him, and I said, the picture that you have
7 of village [sic] men and it's a 120 degrees in the
8 shade, that's why they have on their bathing suits.
9 He said it's not bathing suits, it's loin cloths, and
10 he started to get angry. But I cross-examined him.
11 I said it's 120 degrees in the shade. They put on
12 their loin cloths, and they have their spears, and
13 they're going out into the vast jungle to find food
14 for their village. I am not a savage, and neither
15 are my classmates, but we are descendants of brave
16 warriors. He was finished for the year, and I'm
17 still doing that. I want to say that you give me
18 power as a person now with a disability. I'm not
19 disabled. Chaplain, [inaudible] you going to get
20 some tease, and I'm going to really work out on this
21 body, but I'm going back to school because of you,
22 because you have given me the courage where I was
23 feeling kind of-- how can I do this? But you do this
24 speech and every single day fighting against the
25 opposition and winning. So, I want to thank you for

2 your heart. Thank you for your courage. Thank you
3 for doing this every day, and thank you for giving
4 the students hope, but really a hope that's going to
5 manifest. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very
7 much. Thank you all very much for your testimony.
8 Okay, now we have Josh Melendez, Cai Lin-- if there's
9 any other students that are here, now's the time to
10 come up. Just turn your mic on, the little silver
11 button. There you go.

12 RAHIMA KOLANI: Hi. My name is Rahima
13 Kolani and I go to Untied Charter EMS2 in the Bronx,
14 and I am a member in the Liberation Program at
15 Brotherhood Sister Sol and a youth organizer. If
16 Restorative Justice and mental health support was
17 funded instead of school policing, my friends and I
18 would be able to go to school without having to read
19 about being policed. I would have been suspended less
20 for things that could have been solved with a
21 conversation. I wouldn't have to worry about being
22 pulled away from entry because I got flagged from
23 metal detectors when really-- when in reality I don't
24 have anything on me, and I wouldn't have to worry
25 about any of my cousins getting stopped by the police

2 or deans [sic] in school because of being stereotyped
3 of how they look and accused of withholding certain
4 objects. I wouldn't have to worry about not being
5 heard in situations where I felt threatened in school
6 or outside of school which caused me to be yelled out
7 and locked in a room for four hours when they think
8 that that's being called discipline when in reality
9 it just brings us back to the prison to school
10 pipeline. I could even be in my program right now,
11 but I'm here trying to make a difference, not just me
12 and my friends, but for all youth in New York. So,
13 I'm urging you all to fund Restorative Justice and
14 mental health services instead of school policing
15 because we matter and deserve better. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

17 CAI LIN: Good afternoon, Council
18 Members. My name is Cai Lin. I'm a senior at Fort
19 Hamilton High School in Bay Ridge and a participant
20 of the YA-YA Network. In 2022, the DOE allocated
21 \$323 million to school budgets to make up for the
22 enrollment drops. My school received the most with
23 \$3.5 million. This does not even include the \$5
24 million our school received to renovate our track and
25 field. It is clear to me that I go to a well-funded

2 school, even for one with about 5,000 students;
3 however, with all this funding not a single penny was
4 used to hire new social workers or fund the
5 Restorative Justice team. In fact, a large portion of
6 our student population doesn't even know about these
7 resources. Freshman can't even join our-- freshman
8 aren't even able to join our Restorative Justice team
9 because they operate during their class hours. How
10 are 5,000 students expected to share two social
11 workers? So, while my school does have more mental
12 health and Restorative Justice resources than others,
13 they're extremely underfunded and inaccessible. I
14 know my school doesn't have an issue with finding
15 funding considering the amount of renovations we've
16 had in just my four years there. Fort Hamilton High
17 School is situated in a predominantly white upper
18 middle-class neighborhood. Why would we have a
19 funding issue? So why is that we can receive a brand
20 new track and field, cafeteria, playground, and
21 basketball and tennis courts, but not any new social
22 workers or resources to make the Restorative Justice
23 seem more accessible. If my school isn't receiving
24 proper mental health and Restorative Justice
25 resources, then I can't imagine how underfunded

2 predominantly Black and Brown schools in economically
3 depressed neighborhoods are. I urge you to consider
4 my school's example of the desperate need for more
5 funding for Restorative Justice programs. Baselineing
6 \$6 million for these programs is a step in the right
7 direction, but we envision a future where all schools
8 can have robust Restorative Justice programs with
9 sufficient staffing. All this so schools like mine
10 won't pour millions of dollars into sports while
11 turning a blind eye to mental health. And so red
12 line schools in predominantly Black and Brown
13 neighborhoods can get equity and the resources they
14 deserve. Thank you for your time.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very
16 much.

17 AMINA JALLOW: Good afternoon, Chair. My
18 name is Amina Jallow and I'm with District 13 high
19 school-- I'm a district high school-- I'm a District
20 13 high school junior from Flatbush, Brooklyn, and
21 I'm here today with the YA-YA Network to show you why
22 Restorative Justice and community building still
23 matters with limited funding. As someone who's seen
24 the value in mentally affirmative school
25 environments, this is a huge priority to the school

2 community. My school currently utilizes aspects of
3 Restorative Justice such as peer mediation, but
4 imagine if they had the funding to expand these
5 programs and better connect with the community. Many
6 people find themselves in physical altercations in my
7 school and around the area which leads them to month-
8 long suspensions that hurt their academic ability to
9 grow and destroy their enthusiasm surrounding the
10 school environment. Children thrive off of social
11 interaction and it's vital to make them feel welcome
12 by their communities rather than in prison and shut
13 out due to suspensions that put their social lives on
14 hold. If these children maybe had reformative
15 outlets in contrast with isolative punishments,
16 they'd be less likely to end up under suspensions.
17 Reshaping disciplinary actions towards violent
18 behavior can create children that grow into adults
19 that can manage strong emotions. If we only focus on
20 authoritarian discipline and leave out vital pillars
21 like Student Success Centers, then we're simply
22 ignoring the potential of New York children. Would
23 it hurt to invest in their futures and see how they
24 blossom? While we appreciate the new baseline
25 funding, we also know that it doesn't guarantee the

2 growth of Restorative Justice. We also know that in
3 order to guarantee New York students the best chance
4 of success, our goals should be further emphasized in
5 this time of misinformation becoming ever-present.
6 Lastly, students who feel that their community
7 believes in them ultimately believe in themselves and
8 are more likely to succeed. Let's make that happen
9 and stop cheating out the students of New York.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What do you find
11 most helpful about Restorative Justice programming?

12 RAHIMA KOLANI: For me, what I find most
13 helpful about it is that I feel like it could like
14 benefit the student, like not mentally but also like
15 academically, because a lot of students because they
16 don't have anyone to talk to or, like, they aren't,
17 like, really involved in the school life they, like,
18 don't focus on school and they probably have a better
19 life outside of school, but we also want to bring
20 that inside of school, giving them the time to, like,
21 talk to people and giving them the time to, like,
22 find people to talk to and, like-- sorry, and just
23 communicate, because I feel like communication is a
24 big thing that a lot of students need because they
25 keep a lot of stuff balled up inside. So I feel like

2 Restorative Justice it can't only mean like to help
3 student for like their mental health, but like, it
4 could also benefit them school-wise. Like, you could
5 see grades coming up and stuff like that, and you
6 could see, like, they, like-- it could just benefit
7 them. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Do you have a peer
9 model, a peer-to-peer model in your school?

10 RAHIMA KOLANI: Wait, what do you mean by
11 that?

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: A peer-- a peer-to-
13 peer model in terms of students supporting students
14 encased in it.

15 RAHIMA KOLANI: Yeah, so actually this
16 happened to me. I think this is my 10th grade year.
17 I was going through a lot of stuff, like, in school
18 and my grades were dropping and I felt like I had a
19 lot of stuff going on at home and I couldn't talk to
20 nobody because I felt like, you know, it was just--
21 like, I just kept stuff balled inside. So, my
22 friends, what they did was-- we sat together in the
23 class and we all talked about our problems and we,
24 like, just connected with each other. So that, it
25 made me feel like open to-- it just made me feel like

2 happier and like open to talk to people more, and not
3 only talk to them, but also talk to like my
4 counselors and stuff. Like, just talk to them more,
5 and it just-- I just saw growth in myself. Like, I
6 stopped sleeping in class every day. My grades were
7 coming up, and I was, like, more-- I was a more
8 happier person to know that people were listening to
9 me and focused on my mental health.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Do you have the
11 support you need now in your school?

12 RAHIMA KOLANI: It's mainly students
13 because our counselors don't really, like, check up
14 on us. You know, there's a bunch of other students.
15 So it's mostly unless you go to them, and you know,
16 we have-- like, our classes are mostly taking up our
17 time, and we barely have breaks during class, so like
18 we don't really have time to go to them and tell them
19 what we're going through. So, it's mainly like
20 students coming together.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. Chair?

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all very
23 much. Thank you. Okay, next panel we have Erika
24 Perez Astraila [sp?], Diaraye Fatoumata Bah, Ammy
25 Heredia, Yeray Castano, Guadalupe Tenantitla [sp?],

2 Josh Melendez. Okay, want to begin? Just say your
3 name and you can start.

4 YERAY CASTANO: Hello and good evening.

5 My name is Yeray Castano and I'm a young [sic] leader
6 with Future Tomorrow and [inaudible] Collaborative. I
7 am currently a student of Murray Hill Academy, but
8 before that I used to be a student at Franklin K.
9 Lane High School in Brooklyn. Today, I am here to
10 demand that you start investing more resources in our
11 schools and communities, and divest from the racist
12 policing of students. We need more resources like
13 mental health counselors and social workers and
14 fully-funded programs like Student Success Centers
15 and Restorative Justice that will help students like
16 me strive and succeed. During my time living in the
17 United States, I have attended schools in different
18 states, including Florida. In my experience in which
19 school systems has been the most demanding and
20 competitive. Yet, they [inaudible] and they're most
21 lacking in resources. When I was at Franklin K. Lane
22 I experienced a school system with little resources--
23 with little resources and little support [inaudible].
24 This is one of the many reasons why I decided to
25 transfer over to Murray Hill Academy where the

2 student population might not have the same experience
3 as me or look like me, but the same-- wait. But more
4 resources and supports [inaudible] students need. As
5 a student in the city I experienced that schools with
6 predominantly students of color get less resources
7 than other schools. This is not fair. It is time
8 for the city to start prioritizing supportive school
9 environments and resources for me, my peers, and the
10 future students of this NYC public school system. We
11 deserve access to resources that predominantly seem
12 white schools already receive. Today, I demand that
13 you and the mayor [inaudible] by securing and hiring
14 freeze on school cops that does not allow with
15 [inaudible]. Cut the funding by [inaudible] back
16 into school class position [sic]. Use the funding
17 from both divestments to protect and expand
18 Restorative Justice, mental health and other
19 [inaudible] that helps students [inaudible]. You
20 must cease all NYCPD [inaudible] hiring and training
21 school cops. Do not hire any new school police and
22 permanently eliminate any school police academy
23 classes. This is not the first-- this is the first
24 step towards funding the resources we actually need
25 by not hiring new school cops and cutting the current

2 625 vacant school cops positions. We could
3 immediately have \$100 million to protect and expand
4 Restorative Justice, mental health and other programs
5 that we need to have real safety and supports. It's
6 time for the mayor and the City to start prioritizing
7 our education, to invest in [inaudible] future of
8 this city, to invest in us, the young student that we
9 hopefully some day will be leading this city and our
10 communities. Thank you so much.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

12 ERIKA PEREZ: Now?

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yes, just turn your
14 mic on.

15 ERIKA PEREZ: Okay. Hello. My name is
16 Erika. My pronouns are she/her. I am a sophomore in
17 high school.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Just bring the mic
19 a little closer so we can hear you.

20 ERIKA PEREZ: Sorry. Hello, my name is
21 Erika. My pronouns are she/her. I am a sophomore in
22 high school in Staten Island. I am a youth leader
23 with Make the Road New York and the Urban Youth
24 Collaborative. I am here today because students
25 shouldn't have to go to school with the anxiety of

2 potentially having an encounter with the school
3 police. There are many different ways to address a
4 situation, and I don't think that getting arrested or
5 hurt by a cop in school should be one of them.
6 Immigrant students and their families are already
7 facing so much uncertainty and fear with an increase
8 of the presence of ICE in their communities and the
9 call for the mass deportations. Families are afraid
10 to send to their kids to school. Students should not
11 walk into schools feeling the same fear because the
12 first people they see are police. I have friends and
13 family members that are immigrants. Over the past
14 couple of weeks we have seen ICE agents and vehicles
15 around the schools in Staten Island. There was a
16 lockdown during school one day due to the incident
17 involving a student. A lot of my peers were unaware
18 and assumed the lockdown had to do with ICE, given
19 that they were seen driving by the school earlier
20 that day. As you can imagine, a lot of the young
21 people were worried about what would happen and even
22 let each other know that they were seen around the
23 school. When they talk about the-- when we talk
24 about the impact of ICE, we cannot leave out school
25 cops of the conversation because they both can and

2 have harmed students. What we truly need is mental
3 health support in schools and Restorative Justice.
4 We must secure a hiring freeze, cut funding for the
5 vacant school cop positions, and reinvest money for
6 baseline funding for Restorative Justice, social
7 workers, guidance counselors, and mental health
8 support. True safety comes from caring for and
9 protecting each other, and that doesn't include
10 police nor ICE. Youth people deserve to feel safe in
11 schools, not discriminated against.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very
13 much.

14 AMY HEREDIA: My name is Amy. I'm a
15 junior in high school from Brooklyn and a youth
16 leader at Make the Road New York and the Urban Youth
17 Collaborative. Last week, I was in Albany speaking
18 for the New York For All bill legislation that will
19 protect immigrants, New Yorkers, including myself
20 with the new administration. New York must be
21 protected. Also, protect immigrant students by
22 divesting from all forms of school policing and
23 punitive practices. It's time to shed funding away
24 from system that fueled the school-- the school to
25 deportation pipeline and instead invest in those that

2 truly support and protect students. After a long day
3 I am here because I care about real safety, not
4 police, but my-- but more counselors, mental health
5 support, Restorative Justice, and college access.
6 Schools should be a place where students should feel
7 safe to learn and grow. There's no evidence that
8 police prevent conflict. If anything, they often make
9 things worse. In my experience, having school police
10 is destructive. Every morning, hundreds of students
11 often show up on time, but the metal detectors and
12 slow scanning make us late due to the long lines.
13 The school police speak to us rudely and pull
14 students aside for extra checks. It feels like
15 there's no way to win as a student. Despite my best
16 efforts to come on time and do well, I'm not
17 welcomed. Instead, I'm targeted. I've seen students
18 pulled from the line and taken to bathrooms by
19 teachers and school officers for searches, including
20 under their clothes. One of my friends went through
21 this after scanning. They suspect something was
22 hidden in her shirt. So, she lift up her shirt for a
23 full search even though there was nothing found. She
24 came out angry and embarrassed and delay made the
25 rest of us even later to class. But on the other

2 hand, I have two amazing teachers, my ELA and my
3 Model [sic] UN teacher who makes me truly happy to be
4 safe and safe in school. They have supported me
5 through tough times and helped me grow as a student.
6 Just seeing them smile when I walk reminds me that
7 I'm in a place where I'm validated. Now I imagine if
8 every student had led supportive-- had supportive
9 staff like them, the impact would be powerful.
10 Instead of being greeted by police yelling at us in
11 the hallways, we would greeted with care, respect and
12 support we need to be-- we need to be successful.
13 Even though the education investments Mayor Adams
14 recently announced in the budget, he still continues
15 to fund more school police than counselors, social
16 workers and Restorative Justice staff. We are
17 calling on City Council to choose differently to
18 fully fund our futures and real safety. True safety
19 means care and community, not police or ICE. Our
20 school should be spaces to learn and belong. We
21 don't need to be criminalized as we enter our school
22 building. We need to be treated as students and
23 future leaders. Removing police would improve our
24 school environments. Funding should go towards real
25 safety and support, counselors, mental health, RJ

2 collaborative, and more. It is time to invest in us.
3 Give police-free schools and the resources our school
4 so desperately needs. Thank you. I yield my time to
5 the Chair.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

7 GUADALUPE TENANTITLA: Hello, my name is
8 Guadalupe. My pronouns are she/her. I am a junior in
9 high school in Staten Island, and I am a youth leader
10 with Make the Road New York and the Urban Youth
11 Collaborative. Students deserve to be in supportive
12 and welcoming schools without the worry of being seen
13 as a threat. Mayor Adams has spoken about adding the
14 best budget ever, yet it allocates just \$12 million
15 to Restorative Justice, with half of that set to
16 expire by 2026. At the same time, the NYPD and DOE
17 spend over \$450 million in school policing. This
18 budget shows a clear priority, investing in punitive
19 measures over meaningful support like mental health
20 resources and Restorative Justice practices that
21 truly benefit students. In my personal experience,
22 I've been mistreated and stereotyped by a police
23 officer working in my school for a simple
24 misunderstanding. At that time, I was just an
25 elementary school student who had recently arrived

2 into the country and was still adapting to the new
3 language and environment. What I needed and deserved
4 was care and compassion and instead was punished. I
5 believe that all students no matter their age deserve
6 to be in schools that feel safe and that respect
7 them. This is why I'm here to demand a hiring freeze
8 on school cops that does not allow to fill for
9 attrition, cutting the funding for the remaining
10 vacant school cop positions, as well as using the
11 funding from both of these divestments to protect and
12 expand Restorative Justice and mental health
13 practices that help students thrive and learn. I
14 believe that Restorative Justice and mental health
15 support is something that should exist inside of
16 every school. In my school, we practice Restorative
17 Justice and it has allowed many of my peers and
18 myself to be understood and seen beyond our moments
19 of conflict. I was involved into a verbal
20 altercation with one of the students, and it was
21 Restorative Justice that helped us both get to the
22 root of the problem. We were given the opportunity
23 to express how we felt and how we were impacted. My
24 peer ending up sharing that they were going through
25 some personal things and apologized for lashing it

2 out on me. Since then we haven't had any conflict.
3 With Restorative Justice we can fully share our
4 thoughts and receive support and guidance to grow in
5 a calm and caring place instead of being constantly
6 targeted or degraded. Penalizing students over their
7 actions without taking into consideration what they
8 could be going through will only make them feel like
9 they don't have a safe place to share their emotions
10 or worries. Like many young people here today, I am
11 here to advocate for myself. For those who have had
12 similar experiences like me, we deserve to attend
13 school without fear of being judged or criminalized.
14 We deserve to feel safe and understood inside of our
15 schools. We deserve to have a budget that reflects
16 those needs. Thank you.

17 JOSH MELENDEZ: Hello. My name is Josh
18 Melendez and I live in the Bronx. I'm in 11th grade.
19 I'm a youth leader at Sisters and Brothers United and
20 the Urban Youth Collaborative, and I've been
21 advocating for the school system to invest into
22 social and emotional support of that of young people
23 since I was 12. It has been five years since I've
24 last testified before this council and I honestly
25 feel like I've been repeating myself. Not much has

2 changed since-- not much has changed, and it feels
3 like it needs to grow more and more. When I was
4 younger I was accused of having a gun in my bag and
5 they pulled me to the side. Yeah, they pulled me to
6 the side for hours. I was surrounded by school cops
7 who interrogated me and said that I was in the wrong,
8 even though I told them I had nothing on me, and all
9 they had to do was check my bag. I had to-- they did
10 an investigation on me and they found I had nothing
11 on me. They kept me out of class for hours, and
12 after that they continued to talk behind my back, and
13 I felt like a horrible student. Always-- it made me
14 feel like I was suspicious and at any moment I could
15 be accused of anything. I am in high school now and
16 I'm still feeling the same oppression that I felt
17 years ago. There's no reason that I should walk into
18 a school, a safe haven, and see eight school cops and
19 metal detectors that don't work. We often get
20 scanned with hand wands, and if you are late, expect
21 to wait even longer, maybe up to 30 minutes. It
22 feels horrible. And on top of that, to hear the
23 school cops talk behind my back diminishing us while
24 we are not able to say anything back because they can
25 abuse their power with no accountability. At this

2 point, all I want is the funding from our school to
3 be put into the education system. It is sad to see my
4 teachers having to struggle and put in their own
5 money to buy supplies that should just be given to
6 them. Instead-- that should be given to them,
7 because of potential budget cuts. This budget should
8 not be balanced on the backs of students and
9 teachers. I'm here with my peers to ask the council
10 to pass a budget that one, stops hiring police
11 officers, and don't refill any positions that become
12 empty. Number two, eliminate funding for the 675
13 police positions that are currently unfilled, and
14 number three, redirect any money that is around \$100
15 million and invest it into Restorative Justice mental
16 health support and other staff and services that may
17 help students learn and thrive. Thank you.

18 DIARAYE BAH: good afternoon. My name is
19 Diaraye Bah. I am a high school sophomore and a
20 leader at Make the Road New York and the Urban Youth
21 Collaborative. Council Member Williams represents
22 where I live in Jamaica, and Council Member Julie
23 Menin represents the area where I go to school.
24 Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony
25 today. There are six schools in my building. The

2 majority of students walk through a main entrance
3 where the first people they see every morning are
4 school cops. It feels like I'm walking into a jail.
5 Their presence makes me feel like I've done something
6 wrong or that I'm in trouble. I shouldn't have to
7 feel this way. I come to school to learn. I want to
8 feel like I belong here, but having school cops
9 around makes me feel second guess-- makes me second
10 guess. Is this really a school? We know that the
11 communities with the most resources are the safest
12 and that includes our schools. Our schools don't need
13 school police. We need resources for mental health
14 support, Restorative Justice, and Student Success
15 Centers. Having cops inside of my school makes me
16 feel that people come-- having cops in my school
17 makes me feel that people that come from my
18 background are dangerous and need more surveillance.
19 That's racist. Black students like me and immigrant
20 students are capable of achieving amazing things. We
21 just need genuine support and resources to grow.
22 Instead of wasting money on school cops, we need to
23 invest money in real school safety like Restorative
24 Justice and mental health support. This isn't just
25 about money, but about the direct harm caused by

2 school police. School police escalate conflicts and
3 disproportionately punish Black and Latinx students.
4 There is no proof that school police prevent conflict
5 in our schools, even worse for immigrant students
6 like me. Any interactions with school police can be
7 life-changing. With the increased presence of ICE in
8 our communities and the City's cooperation with
9 immigrant authorities, school police are driving the
10 school to deportation pipeline. I don't want to worry
11 about-- I don't want to worry that any day in school
12 could lead to being separated from my family or
13 derailed from my dreams, but this is the reality I'm
14 living. All young people deserve to feel safe in
15 school regardless of their immigration status. The
16 New York City budget prioritizes funding school
17 police instead of fully funding my education. My
18 school's roof has been leaking water when it rains,
19 and we have to use buckets to catch the water. The
20 water fountain is yellow and gross. Fixing these
21 issues should be a priority. The New York City-- New
22 York City has the largest school police force in the
23 country. With a budget of \$450 million, we are
24 calling on Mayor Adams and the City Council to stop
25 recruiting, hiring, and training school cops. Also,

2 you should permanently eliminate school police
3 academy classes. If we stop hiring school cops and
4 cut the current 675 vacant school cop position, we
5 could immediately have \$100 million. I want to see
6 the money used to protect and expand Restorative
7 Justice, mental health and other programs that we
8 need to have real safety and support. Under the new
9 federal administration young people in schools are
10 under attack. These threats are really scary and we
11 need the City to pass a budget that protects young
12 people and our education. In the near future, I see
13 myself going to college, going to law school, passing
14 the Bar and becoming an immigration lawyer. Protect
15 me. Protect the young people. We need police-free
16 schools now. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all very
18 much. Is there any other students here who have not
19 testified that want to testify? Last call for any
20 other students. Are you sure?

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Going once.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Going once. Okay,
23 thank you all very much. We're going to continue our
24 panels. Next we have Michelle Norris, Rahima Kolani,
25

2 Olympia Kazi, May Depierro, Alexandra Rothman Noonan,
3 Latasha Wright. Okay. You want to start?

4 MAY DEPIERRO: Did I do it right?

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yes.

6 MAY DEPIERRO: Thank you for the
7 opportunity to speak with you today. My name is May
8 DePierro. I'm a Policy Associate at Advocates for
9 Children of New York, and I'm testifying today on
10 behalf of the Arise Coalition which is a group of
11 over 120 organizations and parents and professionals
12 advocating to better support New York City students
13 with disabilities. While you're pushing for
14 improvements in a number of areas, I will focus my
15 limited time today on the need for increased
16 investments in preschool special education and
17 school accessibility. First, we are relieved that
18 the Executive Budget maintains funding for the new
19 preschool special education classes opened this year,
20 but are disappointed that the budget does not include
21 any additional resources to meet the needs of
22 thousands of preschoolers with disabilities waiting
23 for their mandated services. The Arise Coalition
24 joins with dozens of organizations in urging the City
25 to add at least \$70 million for preschool special

2 education. We appreciate the City Council's work to
3 address these challenges. Second, only around one-
4 third of New York City's schools are fully accessible
5 to students, parents, teachers and community members
6 with physical disabilities. More than three decades
7 after being signed into law, the Americans with
8 Disabilities Act still exists in name only for the
9 child who cannot attend their neighborhood school
10 because every entrance sits atop a flight of stairs.
11 The parents who has to miss every concert because the
12 auditorium cannot accommodate their wheelchair, or
13 the social worker who can't work at a school due to
14 the lack of accessible bathrooms. Students without
15 physical disabilities miss out on the chance to make
16 friends with a student who uses a walker or to learn
17 from a teacher with heart disease. The 2025-2029
18 capital plan currently includes \$800 million for
19 school accessibility projects, an amount that
20 represents a decreased commitment once inflation is
21 taken into account. We thank the Council for calling
22 to increase this investment by \$450 million and
23 strongly urge the City to include this funding in the
24 Adopted Budget with a goal of making at least 45

2 percent of school buildings fully accessible by 2030.

3 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

5 LATASHA WRIGHT: Hi, I'm Latasha Wright.

6 I'm the Chief Scientific Officer of BioBus. So,

7 BiosBus was started in New York City in 2008 to help

8 K to 12 students discover, explore and pursue

9 science. We focus on students excluded from the

10 scientific community due to factors such as race,

11 gender, economic status, and physical access. We

12 offer these students a full scientific pathway

13 through our programs which include a single bay of

14 introductory programs on our mobile labs that comes

15 right to their school and then in-depth programs and

16 explore programs that are after-school programs that

17 they can have at their CBOs or also at our sites.

18 And we also have paid junior scientist research

19 interns for high school and college students, and 95

20 percent of the BioBus interns alumni are either

21 majoring or minoring in science or have science jobs.

22 Our interns often focus their research projects on

23 problems they see affecting their communities here in

24 New York City. They analyze contaminants in the

25 Hudson River and testing the safety of the drinking

2 waters in the DOE schools. After BioBus, students
3 are ready to join in diversified a rapidly growing
4 STEM workforce in New York. BioBus alumni are
5 currently working at Pfizer and research labs at
6 Columbia and Mount Sinai and training to be science
7 teachers and pursuing PHDs at top universities. We
8 have consistently met with more demand than we can
9 fill with our current funding. This challenge has
10 recently been exacerbated by the loss of federal
11 support for science education programs. We need New
12 York City's help to ensure young people have the
13 skills to address pressing local and global
14 challenges, innovate and to think critically about
15 the world around them. We're taking steps to be able
16 to meet this demand, and with the support of the New
17 York City Council Members. We have purchased an all-
18 electric bus and we're currently converting to a new
19 mobile lab with an investment of \$500,000 from the
20 City Council. This will empower some new-- reach
21 51,000 students next year. So, that will definitely
22 leverage the City Council capital investments that
23 you already made. So, thank you so much for allowing
24 us to testify.

2 OLYMPIA KAZI: Hi. So, thank you, Chair
3 Brannan and Chair Joseph for the possibility to
4 testify, for the great questions you did this morning
5 seven hours ago to DOE, and you hold them accountable
6 and I hope you're going to follow up later. So, it's
7 a little bit unfair because you put us after the
8 kids. So, imagine-- I'm a parent, imagine me, I'm
9 like a few thousands elementary school kids. I think
10 that the high school kids did a great job. My name is
11 Olympia Kazi. You know me from other kind of
12 advocacy, but today I'm here as the mother a second
13 and a fourth grader in District Six Manhattan in
14 Washington Heights, PSIS 187, and we were awarded one
15 of those grants, you know? We are going to get one
16 teacher for class size reduction [sic]. Guess what?
17 We need 10 teachers and 10 classrooms. DOE is making
18 fun of us. The reason I want you to think of me as
19 thousands parents because we are all desperate and
20 exhausted, and I'm following up to [inaudible]. I'm
21 a seasoned advocate, too Like, we're exhausted,
22 guys. They're making fun of all of us. And so, I
23 want you to know what happened with our application.
24 I participated in December. We are given these
25 teacher [sic], but we ask them for two more very

2 meaningful things. We ask them for cap in
3 enrollment, and they said no. That means they don't
4 care. If you keep sending us 100 [sic] kids while we
5 can accommodate 60, when are we going to meet the
6 class size mandate? The second thing they denied us
7 is we said give us funding for staff to implement,
8 create alternative ideas. We could be doing multi-
9 session, [inaudible] classes, co-locations. There
10 are a lot of creative ways in which the school that
11 runs out of space can still reduce class size.
12 They are making fun of us. I am exhausted and you
13 know I don't get exhausted easily. So, one thing I
14 want to point out that's very important, this school
15 where my kids are right now, they have much screen
16 time because the teachers have 29 seven and eight-
17 year-olds in their class, many of them undiagnosed.
18 Some of them will never be diagnosed, but they are
19 distressed, and so I want to make sure that we bring
20 them in, because the high schoolers are talking
21 about mental health. Our elementary school has kids
22 with anxiety attacks every day, and to me, like I
23 really-- I'm trying hard not to cry, because it's
24 ridiculous what they're doing, and they're doing it
25 frankly-- I don't know, it seems like on purpose.

2 Last year they kept calling this an unfunded mandate,
3 and we know it's not an unfunded mandate. This year,
4 they're still pulling our leg, so I just wanted to
5 bring this perspective here today. I do work with
6 Leonie [sic] and I'm happy to give you any data you
7 need, because when you work in the trenches, you see
8 how they [inaudible] and it's like bad and ignorant,
9 sorry.

10 ALEXANDRA RATHMANN-NOONAN: Good
11 afternoon, Chairs Brannan and Joseph and members of
12 the Council. Thank you for allowing us to testify
13 today. My name is Alexandra Rathmann-Noonan, and I
14 work with the New York Performance Standards
15 Consortium. The Consortium is a group of 38 district
16 public schools mostly in New York City that over the
17 past 25 years have had a waiver from the Board of
18 Regents that have allowed us to graduate students
19 using a system of performance assessments in place of
20 the Regents exams. You heard earlier from one of our
21 students, Avery, our work in performance assessment
22 is pointed to as a national model, including by New
23 York State's Graduation Measure Initiative and the
24 Plan pilot. But what makes Consortium schools
25 special goes beyond graduation requirements. Like

2 Avery said, it's the type of student-driven,
3 empowering learning that can happen in classrooms
4 that are not required to teach to the test.
5 Consortium schools have a history of success. Our
6 students have long had higher graduation rates,
7 college enrollment rates, and college persistence
8 than similar students in other schools. This council
9 and the city have supported the work of the
10 Consortium over the past 10 years through a program
11 called the Affinity Schools Program. Through
12 Affinity, nonprofit organizations that support unique
13 groups of schools receive funding to support
14 implementation of these models. We are very grateful
15 that after several cycles of year-to-year extensions,
16 this council pushed for and the Mayor's office has
17 agreed to baseline funding for Affinity so that we
18 can continue to provide support with more certainty
19 about its sustainability over time. We also would
20 like to extend an invitation to members of this
21 council to visit a Consortium school and participate
22 in our upcoming graduation PBAT [sic] oral defenses,
23 during which students defend their extensive written
24 work and discussion with external evaluators. As New
25 York City looks to expand pathways to graduation

2 beyond the Regents, we can be helpful in providing a
3 model for an even more rigorous alternative, and we
4 are grateful for the council's recognition of the
5 importance of supporting innovative school models
6 like ours through the Affinity program. We also want
7 to advocate for a similar extension of funding for
8 other educational programs including Restorative
9 Justice, Learning to Work, and the Immigrant Family
10 Communications and Outreach program that provide
11 vital support to the students in Consortium schools.
12 Thank you.

13 : Good afternoon and thank you for the
14 opportunity to testify. My name is Michelle Norris.
15 I am a licensed professional engineer, and I've been
16 working in New York City for the last 38 years. I'm
17 also a parent to [inaudible] and [inaudible]
18 wheelchair user. So, I'm going to sort of skip
19 through the part about how \$800 million sounds like a
20 lot of money, but it's actually less money than the
21 \$750 million that was allocated the last time and say
22 we need the full \$1.25 billion to reach full
23 accessibility by 2045. I just want to explain why
24 that's so important to me. My son, Abie [sic] grew
25 up across the street from our local elementary school

2 and it still isn't accessible even today. Instead of
3 rolling to school with his wheelchair he was bused
4 over an hour each way to Nassau County. He missed
5 out on making friends in our neighborhood. He missed
6 out on playing with his classrooms across the street
7 on the playground. He missed out on after-school
8 programs because busing didn't extend to after
9 school. He wasted thousands and thousands of hours
10 of his life staring out the bus window. While Abie
11 was in Nassau County, my younger son Adie [sp?] was
12 in Astoria in a school that was inaccessible. At
13 every event I had to go begging for special
14 accommodations. Could someone please open the side
15 door so I could pull Abie's chair up the seven steps
16 to the cafeteria for the student of the month? Could
17 I carry Abie's wheelchair up three flights of-- into
18 the auditorium and leave Abie with Izzy [sic] and
19 then carry him upstairs so that we could watch Izzy
20 in a school performance. Abie's in college now. He's
21 going to graduate next year. I'm very proud, and I'm
22 wondering where is he going to work, because New York
23 City schools employ about 80,000 New Yorkers, and
24 maybe Abie could be one of them, you know. He's got
25 a fine GPA, but he'll be at unfair disadvantage

2 because he can only work at an accessible school, and
3 how would you feel if you could only be even
4 permitted to apply to a third of the jobs that you
5 were qualified for because the other two thirds
6 didn't have a bathroom where you could go during the
7 day? So, I urge you to support increasing the
8 2025/2029 Capital Budget for accessibility to \$1.25
9 billion. Your fellow New Yorkers, students, family
10 and the teachers, guidance counselors, and principals
11 of the future are counting on you. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very
13 much. Okay, next panel Aaron Sanders, David Abrams,
14 Poullette Ha-Healy, Michaela Shuchman, Paola
15 Martinez=Boone, Edward Sanchez. I think Edward went
16 already, though. I'm going to-- there's some other
17 names. I don't know if anyone came up if you're here.
18 Molly Senack, Aaron Sanders, David Abrams. Go ahead.
19 You want to start?

20 PAOLA MARTINEZ-BOONE: Yeah. Good
21 afternoon. Thank you so much for the opportunity to
22 testify today. My name is Paola Martinez-Boone. I am
23 senior advocate social worker at the New York Lawyers
24 for the Public Interest, and also a special education
25 coordinator. We are a civil rights legal

2 organization who serves individuals and communities
3 by assisting them in enforcing their rights including
4 children and adults with disabilities. NYLPI is
5 strongly [inaudible] the enactment of recent bills
6 establishing peer-to-peer support model to promote
7 mental health for its students. Right now, too many
8 students are struggling in silence. We heard today
9 by the amazing amount of students that you have today
10 in support of more social workers and psychologists
11 in schools. One in five children faces a mental
12 health challenge. In 2023, half of New York City
13 teenagers reported that mild symptoms of depression
14 were contributing to school avoidance and chronic
15 absenteeism. In 2021, about 16 percent, almost
16 30,000 student reported suicidal ideation with nine
17 percent almost 17,000 students attempting suicide.
18 Students identifying as transgender reported high
19 rates of persistent sadness. Nearly 60 percent of
20 students in District 75 are chronically absent,
21 compared to 36 percent to the citywide average due to
22 anxiety, depression, and behavioral challenges. In
23 2024, my agency, the New York Lawyers for the Public
24 Interest, released a report a special education-- New
25 York City's failure to educate students classified

2 with emotional disability. We heard it today. We
3 need the funds. We need the assistance. Investing
4 in mental health is also investing academic success
5 for all students. Thank you today for the
6 opportunity.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

8 MICHAELA SHUCHMAN: Good afternoon. My
9 name is Michaela Shuchman and I'm a Skadden Legal
10 Fellow at Legal Services NYC. Thank you for the
11 opportunity to testify. The education rights
12 practice at LSNYC assists hundreds of New York City
13 school children and their families each year to
14 ensure access to quality education through our
15 holistic model of representation. In addition to
16 representing individual students and their families,
17 we also seek to address systemic issues impacting the
18 clients we serve. As an example of both direct and
19 systemic advocacy, I represent many students with
20 disabilities in manifestation determination reviews.
21 As you might know, MDRs take place when a student
22 with a disability is suspended for greater than 10
23 days, and this critical meeting should determine
24 whether the behavior that led to this suspension stem
25 from the student's disability and whether they were

2 recurving their IEP-mandated services. If the answer
3 is yes, the student is able to return to the
4 classroom and services are put in place to help
5 identify the root of the issue. However, in most of
6 my client's experiences, schools were more focused on
7 punishment than support. I want to briefly share the
8 experience of a client of mine recently, JJ. So,
9 he's a fifth grade student with a disability and he
10 has academic and behavioral needs due to significant
11 trauma in his past. At every IEP meeting over the
12 last three years, his teachers and guardian have
13 raised concerns. He struggles to follow the rules,
14 make connections with peers and teachers and progress
15 academically, but the school did nothing to change
16 his IEP or add more support. Then in February, JJ
17 slapped a peer one day after school after he was
18 taunted, and he was immediately suspended. At the
19 MDR, despite extensive evidence through evaluations
20 and anecdotal observations that JJ was angry and
21 clinically depressed and this manifested its physical
22 altercations with peers. The team refused to find
23 that it was a manifestation. They even went to say
24 that although they could punish JJ for his actions
25 off school grounds, they couldn't consider his

2 disability in those actions, because his IEP wasn't
3 implemented there. This is not a meaningful analysis
4 of that student's disability. This is just one
5 example of a case that we have that then we use to
6 impact our systemic advocacy. We handle nearly 600
7 education cases each year across the boroughs, but
8 the need for our education advocacy far outstrips our
9 resources. So, with the support of City Council, we
10 hope to continue this work and expand the number of
11 children and parents who can receive legal advice so
12 that students like JJ when we have those experiences,
13 we can continue to work with them. We can appeal
14 that MDR. We can help him get the special education
15 services he needs and even use that to fuel our mor
16 systemic advocacy to make sure that change is made
17 for all students. Thank you.

18 AARON MICHAEL SANDERS: Good evening. My
19 name is Aaron Michael Sanders and I'm the Deputy
20 Director of Government and Community Relations at
21 Grant Street Settlement. Today, we commend the City
22 for proposing to restore and baseline \$192 million in
23 funding for Early Childhood education. However, we
24 encourage the City to commit to these restorations.
25 Expenditure reductions to the City's early education

2 programs would negatively impact children and
3 families. City funding supports our network of
4 center-based Early Childhood education programs
5 throughout south Manhattan, Brooklyn and now the
6 Bronx. Grant Street's Early Childhood education
7 programs serve working families and their children,
8 many of whom live in NYCHA housing and face multiple
9 obstacles in respect to education, health and
10 economic prosperity. Our network of childcare and
11 educational programs provide families with the
12 opportunities that they need to thrive and survive.
13 Budget reduction for the City's Early Childhood
14 education program would be catastrophic for working
15 families. According to a report from the New York
16 City Comptroller's Office earlier this year, the
17 childcare sector faces ongoing challenges post-
18 pandemic, including a dearth of childcare slots,
19 retention in this workforce and soaring childcare
20 costs. As cited in the report, from 2018 to 2023,
21 New York's average annual childcare prices were
22 higher than every other state with the exception of
23 Massachusetts. Early Childhood education programs
24 are not our only concern. We're also concerned about
25 youth education programs at Grant Street Settlement.

2 A restoration of funding for community schools is an
3 important resource for the youth we serve. While
4 restoring the \$14 million in funding in the budget,
5 we can continue to provide youth with key services
6 that corelated with youth development a long term
7 success. Cuts to youth programs will have a chilling
8 effect on the families and the next generations of
9 leaders we heard from today. Baselining \$30 million
10 in funding for the Learning to Work program will
11 provide substantive workforce development
12 opportunities for adolescents and young adults alike,
13 and this program is vitally important too the
14 maturation of children and youth in closing, we urge
15 the City Council to restore funding for these
16 quality programs ranging from birth through high
17 school graduation and thank you for your support.

18 PAULLETTE HA-HEALY: Hi. My name is
19 Paullette Ha-Healy. I'm a disability advocate, a
20 parent leader with the Coalition for Equitable
21 Education Funding, and I'm raising two kids with
22 disabilities in high school, and I'm here again
23 today, Chair Joseph and Chair Brannan, for another
24 round of hearings to ask for baseline funding for
25 essential programs. Crucial supports like the mental

2 health continuum, Promise NYC, summer programming,
3 and Restorative Justice are on the chopping block due
4 to the egregious divestment that Governor Hochul
5 burdened New York City within this year's state
6 budget. So, we need our City Council to step up and
7 fill those gaps. On behalf of my disability
8 community, I am asking our partners in City Council
9 to baseline \$70 million for pre-school special
10 education services, evaluations, and supports, \$17.5
11 million for academic intervention supports for
12 students struggling to read-- sorry, I lost my spot--
13 \$5 million for the mental health continuum, and \$3.7
14 million to enhance supports at our school-- at our
15 in-school mental health clinic. Also, it's worth
16 nothing if Future Ready is asking for a bigger
17 investment, they need to do better incorporating
18 those opportunities for our D75 students. Over 100
19 schools and only two D75 schools in Future Ready. I
20 know you call them out on that, Chair Joseph. But
21 come on, our students with disabilities cannot
22 continue being an afterthought. They cannot afford
23 to wait for their mandated services to start, or a
24 special education pre-k seat, or for a bus route to
25 be assigned to them or for an evaluation to complete

2 their transition plan before they move on to college.
3 Lucas is looking at colleges next year. So, that's--
4 and you met Lucas when he was in third grade. So,
5 and you and I haven't aged a day. So, if our city
6 can't see the future within our students, then we
7 don't see a future at all. And I implore our
8 partners in City Council to stand up for New York
9 City families and baseline these programs that have
10 literally saved lives, including my own child who
11 testified earlier today who wouldn't be here if it
12 wasn't for the mental health supports and
13 interventions. And I say that with a heavy, heavy
14 heart. So, I said this this morning at the rally,
15 but it's worth repeating. During a time when our
16 federal government is looking to privatize public
17 education and divert our tax money into the pockets
18 of charter school billionaires, I beg you to stand up
19 for New York City families and invest in our public
20 schools now, because that will send the message that
21 our children are not for sale. Thank you.

22 DAVID ADAMS: Thank you. Good evening,
23 Chair Joseph. Good evening, Chair Brannan. I am
24 David Adams and I'm the Chief Executive Officer of
25 the Urban Assembly and I want to begin by expressing

2 my deep gratitude to the Council for recognizing the
3 value of the Affinity Network by calling for it's
4 funding to be baselined in this year's city budget. I
5 want to also thank the Administration for ensuring
6 that the Executive Budget includes that baseline,
7 reflecting an investment in education, innovation,
8 and equity, as well as the economic and social
9 mobility of New York City Public School students. As
10 a member of the Affinity Network, the Urban Assembly
11 supports 22 public high schools across the City
12 providing unscreened, career-connected education to
13 students, many of who testified earlier today around
14 the importance of CPR who are often furthest from
15 opportunity. We do this while achieving outcomes
16 that are consistently exceeding citywide averages,
17 particularly for our most vulnerable learners. Let
18 me go through some of those outcomes. In 2023 our
19 graduation rate was over 90 percent, nearly six
20 points above the City's average, for students with
21 disabilities our schools graduated 83 percent, a full
22 19 points higher than the citywide average, and
23 narrowed or closed the racial achievement gap that
24 persists across the systems. In fact, we reversed
25 the citywide Black/White and Hispanic/White gaps by

2 four to 10 percentage points. This is what equity
3 looks like in action and this is what it looks like
4 to invest in all learners. The Affinity model works
5 because it leverages trusted mission-driven partners
6 like the Urban Assembly to deliver high-impact
7 school-based supports and our approach combines
8 social and emotional learning, career and technical
9 education, post-secondary planning, work-based
10 learning, and instructional coaching while also
11 driving innovation like the integration of AI into
12 classrooms. We don't just support individual
13 schools. We scale effective practices systemwide.
14 Baseline Affinity affirms the City's belief in this
15 proven model and unlocks the ability to plan and
16 invest over the long term. The results speak for
17 themselves. New Urban Assembly partner schools have
18 increased graduation rates by an average of 20
19 percent over five years. The return on investment is
20 undeniable. Our innovations like AI, graduation
21 tracking, crew [sic], English as a new language,
22 social and emotional learning, and portfolio-based
23 feedback [inaudible] meaningful impacts for students
24 in New York City public schools, and we won't stop
25 there. Chair Joseph, members of the committee, thank

2 you for your partnership. Thank you for your
3 advocacy. Your leadership ensures that equity in
4 excellence remains the standard for all students in
5 this city. Thank you for recognizing the value of
6 this work, and thank you for standing with us to
7 ensure the future.

8 MOLLY SENACK: Good evening. My name is
9 Molly Senack and I'm the Education and Employment
10 Community Organizer for Center for Independence of
11 the Disabled New York, and I'm also a member of the
12 Coalition for Equitable Education Funding. First,
13 let me thank you all so much for giving us the
14 opportunity to testify and for your continued
15 advocacy for the education programs that we've been
16 hearing about today. Let me start off by saying that
17 we are very pleased to see that the Fiscal Year 2026
18 Executive Budget continued-- pardon me-- included
19 long-term funding for several programs including 3K,
20 preschool special education, community schools, and
21 many others. However, while these programs were
22 baselined in the Executive Budget, others were funded
23 for one year only, meaning they will once again be at
24 risk of cuts in 2026. Funding programs for a year at
25 a time puts communities in an inherently uncertain

1 position. A program that is only guaranteed for a
2 year is going to have more trouble attracting,
3 hiring, training, and retaining qualified staff.
4 Simultaneously, students and families are asked to
5 rely on the content of programs whose presence they
6 cannot depend on. While actual program cuts may or
7 may not be made in 2026, the impact of the
8 uncertainty of how to invest in these programs will
9 be felt immediately. The programs that are at risk
10 include Restorative Justice, the mental health
11 continuum, Immigrant Family Communication and
12 Outreach, Learning to Work, and summer programming,
13 and Student Success Centers were excluded from the
14 Executive Budget altogether and are facing cuts as
15 early as July. These programs were implemented to
16 provide support for the students with the greatest
17 needs, and while the loss will be felt by all New
18 York City students, if long-term funding for these
19 programs is not included in the final budget, students
20 with disabilities will be disproportionately
21 impacted. I'd like to take this moment to focus on
22 all of the mental health statistics we have been
23 hearing, and to remind everyone that earlier this
24 room was filled with students, and we saw how the
25

2 statistics are represented by the individuals. More
3 information on this is included in my written
4 testimony, but I would just like to say that in
5 addition to those investments, we would also like to
6 see continued investment for the mental health
7 continuum, for Early Childhood special education, and
8 for the increased funding for physical accessibility
9 capital projects. Thank you so much for your time.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Thank
11 you all very much. Okay, now we're moving to Zoom.
12 Oh, sorry. Okay, just say your name and you can
13 begin. Sorry about that.

14 MARK GONSALVES: No problem, Chair.
15 Thank you, Chair Joseph. Thank you, Chair Brannan.
16 Appreciate your time. My name is Mark Gonsalves. I'm
17 Co-president of the Citywide Council on Special
18 Education, but I'm speaking here tonight as a parent
19 of two students with IEPs. The proposed education
20 budget for FY26 falls far short of what's needed for
21 students with disabilities. 120, 50, 38, six, those
22 four numbers are just part of what we really need for
23 students with disabilities: \$120 million is needed
24 for the autism specialized programs, NEST, Horizon,
25 AIMS, \$50 million for special education preschool

2 seats, \$38 million for preschool special related
3 services, and \$6 million for the weekend and weekday
4 academy programs. Chair Joseph and Brannan, you both
5 spoke today earlier about how great NEST and Horizon
6 are. They're phenomenal. They started three
7 districts where they guaranteed all kindergartners
8 seats. We need to get out to the other 29 districts.
9 Right now what's happening is-- you heard from Deputy
10 Chancellor Foti, they are highly sought after. Why
11 are they sought after? Because you can't get into
12 one of them. There's waiting lists. And what's
13 happening? Where are the kids going? They're going
14 to Carter cases. So that \$1.3 billion, because the
15 DOE isn't doing their job. They're going to D75,
16 more restricted programs which are costing much more
17 than if we do NEST and Horizon. That's the reality.
18 We need the funding. \$120 million over the next
19 three years. Get it in all 29 districts. \$50 million
20 for preschool special education-- we heard testimony
21 from Foti. Again, 616 kids are waiting today for a
22 seat. You've invested \$55 last year for 700 seats. We
23 need another \$50 million for the 620 seats that are
24 going to be needed next year. We know it. It's
25 happened year after year after year. \$38 million for

2 preschool special education related service
3 providers-- we heard testimony today nearly 11,000
4 preschool special education kids aren't getting their
5 related services because they don't have providers.
6 We heard Deputy Chancellor Foti talk about how they
7 will do with what they got. Well, they don't have
8 enough money. They need that \$38 million. They need
9 it now so we can have our kids get the services they
10 need. And we need \$6 million for the Saturday
11 academy and weekday academy programs. They're
12 phenomenal. My younger son has been doing it the
13 last three years because he hasn't been getting his
14 services in his DOE school. Now, I hope next year he
15 doesn't need it, but there's going to be plenty of
16 other kids who aren't getting the services, and we
17 need to make sure we have the Saturday academy and
18 the weekday academy available for those kids so they
19 can get the compensatory seats and services they
20 need. Finally, I'll say we need more literacy
21 supports and dyslexia supports. IRead is great, but
22 we heard it's in eight schools and they're adding
23 three more. We got Bronx Literacy Academy which is
24 phenomenal. We got Brooklyn Literacy Academy. It's
25 phenomenal. That's 80 more seats for next year.

2 That's a drop in the bucket. We need a program in
3 every district, minimum, and it's not going to happen
4 in 20 years. It needs to happen in the next two or
5 three years. We can't afford to wait. 120, 50, 38
6 and six, that's what our students need. Chair
7 Brannan, you've talking about investments. The best
8 investment we can do is investing in our own kids and
9 doing it now. It's the best ROI we've got. Thank
10 you, Chair Brannan. Thank you, Chair Joseph.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very
12 much.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I have a question
14 for you. What does the \$120 million number cover in
15 terms of services?

16 MARK GONSALVES: \$120 million would roll
17 out the kindergarten seats in all 29 districts that
18 remain. That's the number we've gotten from the DOE,
19 but right now they've got three districts. We need
20 to get the other 29. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we're going
23 to Zoom now. Amy Tsai or Tsay [sic].

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

25 AMY TSAI: Can you hear me?

1 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yes.

2 AMY TSAI: Thank you. Good evening, Chair
3 Brannan and Chair Joseph. Thank you for the
4 opportunity to speak tonight. It's been a long day
5 and I heard four hours in person and now I'm
6 virtually. So, I'm taking my testimony as a parent
7 of New York City School students and a parent leader
8 in the Bronx, specifically District 10 Northwest. I
9 want to touch on how I'm a member of the ARISE
10 Coalition from Advocates for Children as well as a
11 member of the Dignity in Schools Coalition. And I
12 want to be very specific about our most vulnerable
13 students, especially students with disabilities,
14 students who are immigrants to this country, students
15 that are marginalized from society, and students that
16 are in the low income and poverty. Their safety, the
17 welcoming in our schools are in danger by what our
18 society is going through. Just shortly or five years
19 now we have just come out of a pandemic and our
20 students are still not feeling comfortable in their
21 schools. School climate still needs to be an
22 investment in expansion of mental health supports,
23 programs around Restorative Justice, supportive
24 around hiring social workers and coordinators for our
25

2 most vulnerable in foster care, students that are
3 going through the shelter system with their families,
4 and especially our students who are new to this
5 country and need the support because of the high
6 alert around authority. Dignity in Schools has
7 shared our testimony earlier in regards to their ask,
8 and they are asking \$80 million in order to expand
9 over hiring for coordinators around 500 schools. \$5
10 million for mental health services, \$12 million for
11 Restorative Justice programs--

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Your time
13 is expired. Thank you.

14 AMY TSAI: [inaudible] schools. And I
15 appreciate the opportunity. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very
17 much. Now we have Carolyn Lewis.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

19 CAROLYN LEWIS: Good evening, City
20 Council. I appreciate the opportunity. My name is
21 Carolyn Lewis. I'm Vice President of the National
22 Child ID Program. Although this is a public safety
23 concern, the reason I'm reaching out to the Education
24 Committee and Finance is just to speak to you a
25 little bit. The National Child ID program was

2 founded in 1997 after the tragic abduction of Amber
3 Hagerman which is where the Amber Alert came from.
4 And we have since-- during that time, it took Amber's
5 family seven days to gather her DNA. This program
6 that I'm speaking about, we have partnered with the
7 National Organization of Black Law Enforcement
8 Executives, the NFL, all 32 teams, Caring for Kids
9 program, and Hall of Famers. It is a comprehensive
10 informational kit, three card style [sic] kit that
11 the family would keep. It does not go in a database.
12 It does not-- be given to the authorities. Everyone--
13 - I believe everyone would know the most important
14 thing you can do in a matter of minutes when a person
15 goes missing is direct DNA. What we are asking for
16 and how we have partnered-- I'm just going to mention
17 one thing. So we know that May 25th is National
18 Missing Children's Day, and that's really one of the
19 reasons that I wanted to come on. The Child ID has
20 partnered with Noble [sic], National Congress of
21 American Indians, and we focus on trying to bring
22 this gift of safety to communities specifically of
23 color. More than 2,300 children between 11 and 21 go
24 missing every single day. That's about 460,000. Our
25 call to action is we are seeking your help in raising

2 \$1 million for a manufacturing grant. It is an
3 amount-- if the amount is secured, the National Child
4 ID program will match dollar for dollar, allowing us
5 to provide 600,000 free children DNA kits to students
6 across the US. We're also-- we are a program that is
7 not federally funded. We are based on sponsorships,
8 scholarships, and donations.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time is expired.
10 Thank you.

11 CAROLYN LEWIS: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Now, we
13 have-- thank you very much, Carolyn. Now we have
14 Eduardo Antonetti.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

16 EDUARDO ANTONETTI: Chair Joseph and
17 Chair Brannan, my name is Doctor Eduardo Antonetti
18 and I am the Senior Director of Advancement for
19 Internationals Network. Internationals Network is an
20 education nonprofit organization with more than 20
21 years of success in supporting immigrant and refugee
22 students in New York City Public Schools. Thank you
23 for the opportunity to testify. In an earlier hearing
24 in March I testified in support of the Affinity
25 organizations contract and I was thrilled to now see

2 it included in the Mayor's Executive Budget. I know
3 Chair Joseph has championed the work of the Affinity
4 partners in the past, and we want to thank her for
5 her leadership. We're hoping the Council will keep
6 the Affinity contract in their response to the
7 Mayor's Executive Budget. The Affinity contract
8 enables International's team of experts to work
9 closely with New York City superintendents, district
10 teams, school leaders, teachers, counselors, and
11 staff of our schools to ensure that immigrant and
12 refugee students continue to receive the necessary
13 resources and opportunities to succeed.
14 Internationals invest in our school leaders and staff
15 so they are empowered and supported and that is a
16 major reason why we have such strong teacher and
17 principal retention rates. I also urge the Council
18 to increase and baseline the funding for the
19 Immigrant Family Communications and Outreach
20 initiative. This initiative strengthens New York
21 City Public School's communication with immigrant
22 families, many of whom would otherwise be left
23 without important information, including information
24 about the rights of students with disabilities. Given
25 the increase in the number of newly arrived immigrant

2 families in New York City, it is critical for this
3 initiative to not only continue, but go stronger. We
4 strongly urge the City Council and the Mayor to
5 prioritize and preserve this funding for the Affinity
6 organization contracts, and the Immigrant Family
7 Communications initiative in the upcoming budget, as
8 well as any additional discretionary funding to
9 support education for multilingual learners and
10 migrant youth. Thank you for your consideration and
11 for your continued support of our public school
12 system and our newest New Yorkers. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very much.
14 Now we have Rachael Gazdick.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Or Rachel Gazdick
17 [sp?].

18 DANIEL: Good evening Chairs Brannan and
19 Joseph. I'm Daniel [sic] I'm speaking on behalf of
20 our CEO Rachael Gazdick. I'm here today to ask that
21 you prioritize New York Edge's FY26 citywide funding
22 request. We are seeking \$1.2 million under this
23 council's afterschool enrichment initiative and
24 \$250,000 under the council's social/emotional support
25 for students initiative. After-school enrichment

2 funding has enabled us to enrich and expand our
3 school year and summer programs and has allowed us to
4 develop a new, unique, and engaging programs. Our
5 funding, however, has remained at \$1 million for the
6 past 15 years, despite the fact that we have tripled
7 in size and have significantly increased the number
8 of children served. Increased funding will reflect
9 our growth and will help mitigate some of the
10 challenges which have occurred as a result of the
11 City's Passport system and the resulting contract
12 registration and payment delays. Social/emotional
13 support for students funding will enable us to
14 support our current SEL programming providing high-
15 quality evidence-based social and emotional learning
16 assessments curriculum and resources for all of our
17 partner schools, our students and their families.
18 New York Edge is the City's largest provider of
19 after-school and summer programming, serving 33,000
20 students across more than 130 schools and 37 of the
21 51 council districts including four Beacon centers,
22 21 community schools, and four food pantries. We
23 proudly offer culturally-responsive programming
24 rooted in academic enrichment, sports, health and
25 wellness, visual and performing arts, STEM,

2 leadership in college and career readiness with
3 social/emotional learning intentionally woven
4 throughout everything we do. New York Edge is
5 students and families are extraordinarily grateful
6 for the past 33 years of support from New York City
7 Council. The time has come however where increased
8 funding is vitally needed. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Now we
10 have Aaliyah Thomas.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

12 AALIYAH THOMAS: Good afternoon,
13 Chairperson Brannan and Joseph. How are you today?
14 Can you see me?

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yes, go ahead.

16 AALIYAH THOMAS: Oh, good afternoon.
17 Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify
18 today. I am testifying today on behalf of
19 homeschooling students and parents. I have been with
20 you all since 10 o'clock this morning and I was
21 fortunate enough to hear the testimony from all the
22 different panelists regarding every class of
23 students, but no one has mentioned homeschooling
24 students which has been up by 324 percent since the
25 pandemic. These students are going unaccounted for.

2 The parents don't receive any support from the Office
3 of Homeschooling right now which is in place. So I'm
4 calling for the City Council-- or rather to bring
5 that to the Council's attention and see if we can get
6 this Office of Homeschooling redesigned and recreated
7 so that it's more accessible to members of the
8 community. As we know that homeschooling now is
9 becoming a popular trend since the pandemic. So I
10 feel like we need-- just like we have family welcome
11 centers throughout the different boroughs, we need to
12 have a point of access for families with children who
13 are not enrolled in traditional public school
14 settings, because at the end of the day, every parent
15 has the same desire to have healthy, productive,
16 successful members of society as well. So, I think
17 we need to put more supports in place for these
18 families and those students. I'm just bringing that
19 to your attention, and I thank you for your time.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Now we
21 have Glendaliz Valdez.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

23 GLENDALIZ VALDEZ: Good evening, Chairs
24 Brannan and Joseph. My name is Glendaliz Valdez.
25 I'm the Director of Youth Development Programming at

2 the Committee for Hispanic Children and Families.
3 CHCF has delivered after school programming in
4 partnership with three schools in the Bronx and
5 college and career readiness programming to high
6 school juniors and seniors at four schools in
7 Manhattan and the Bronx. Having delivered school-
8 based services in the Bronx for over 25 years, we
9 have built strong collaborative relationships with
10 school leaders and we're considered an integral part
11 of the school team. CHCF offers enhanced interests
12 and exploratory learning, ensuring that student are
13 college and career ready and are inspired and
14 equipped with 21st century skills. We have
15 demonstrated that the value added of connecting
16 community-based partners with schools to
17 comprehensively meet the unique needs of students and
18 their families, and we support efforts to baseline an
19 increased investment in programs that strengthen
20 these partnerships. CHCF is deeply engaged in the
21 New York City Early Care and Learning system, both as
22 a childcare resource and referral agency and a
23 contracted family childcare network. We have grown
24 to support 40 affiliated programs to deliver high-
25 quality culturally-responsive programming to 193

2 children. We're happy that the Executive Budget
3 restores and baselines 3K, Early Childhood education
4 extended day seats, and preschool special education
5 classes. As an organization that provides enrollment
6 support for families, we continue to identify and
7 mitigate barriers for families. The City must
8 address the essential enrollment challenges. This
9 includes My City that failed to optimize all
10 subsidies and care options for families. The Family
11 Childcare Network contracts end in 2026 and must be
12 replaced through a new RFP. Long-standing funding
13 and contract inequities impacting low income
14 communities of color, immigrant communities, and a
15 workforce largely composed of women of color and
16 immigrant women must be addressed. These disparities
17 lead to resource gaps for families and children in
18 these programs contributing to a broader educational
19 inequity.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time is expired.

21 Thank you.

22 GLENDALIZ VALDEZ: Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very
24 much. Now we have Christopher Johnson.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

2 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Yeah, yeah.
3 Hello, Chairs Brannan and Rita Joseph. My name is
4 Christopher Leon Johnson, and I'm testifying on
5 support of charter school group [inaudible] at the
6 same time we need to make sure that 32BJ be allowed
7 to make all their workers part of the union. I'm
8 talking about security guards, office cleaners,
9 everybody that works inside a charter school be part
10 of 32BJ. At the same time, I'm calling on you, Chair
11 Joseph and Chair Brannan, since you both are endorsed
12 by 32BJ, to really work with Eva Moskowitz Success
13 Academy and all the other top charter school network
14 in the city to have [inaudible]. Same time y'all
15 need to make sure that the UFT doesn't get involved
16 with this, because I see that what they trying to do,
17 the UFT, is make sure that charter schools are
18 eradicated. My niece goes to a charter school. It's
19 a great charter school in my neighborhood, and they
20 need [inaudible]. They go out. They work in the
21 communities. They do great-- better work than public
22 school communities [sic]. So at the same time I'm
23 calling on the Chairs, both Charis right here, to
24 preserve charter schools in the city. Really support
25 the Success Academies, all the Success Academies

2 charter schools in the city and support all charter
3 schools in the city, and please do not be scared of
4 the UFT and Michael Mulgrew of his power. He's only
5 a union boss, but [inaudible] too. So, this-- we're
6 going to protect the people that really does the
7 great work in the community like the charter schools.
8 At the same time, we need to make sure that all
9 security guards that work in charter schools and
10 porters and cleaners and essential workers inside the
11 charter school system are unionized under 32BJ. I
12 know that the UFT will never allow it, because
13 they're against charter schools, but I know 32BJ
14 will. And I think that 32BJ need to be on the table
15 with Success Academy to make sure that--

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Your time
17 is expired. Thank you.

18 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: [inaudible] to
19 make sure that-- thank you. To make sure that the
20 guards unionize. So, thank you so much. Enjoy your
21 day.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Okay,
23 with that-- Day seven of Executive Budget hearings is
24 adjourned. Thank you.

25 [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 June 4, 2025