

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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April 19, 2017  
Start: 1:22 p.m.  
Recess: 5:24 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Daniel Dromm  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Vincent J. Gentile  
Daniel R. Garodnick  
Margaret S. Chin  
Stephen T. Levin  
Deborah L. Rose  
Ben Kallos  
Andy L. King  
Inez D. Barron  
Chaim M. Deutsch  
Mark Levine  
Alan N. Maisel  
Antonio Reynoso  
Ydanis A. Rodriguez  
Helen K. Rosenthal  
Mark Treyger  
Rafael Salamanca, Jr.

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

Elizabeth Rose  
NYC Department of Education Deputy Chancellor

Laura Feijoo  
Senior Superintendent in DOE Office of School  
Support and Supervision

Lindsey Harr  
Executive Director at the Office of School  
Wellness Programs

Robert Sanft  
Chief Executive Director at the Office of Student  
Enrollment at Department of Education

Anna Commitante  
Executive Director of Curriculum Instruction and  
Professional Learning in Division of Teaching and  
Learning

Kenyatte Reid

Jeff Lowell  
Brooklyn Borough President's Office

Victoria Reing  
Bronx Borough President Office

Tanya St. Julien  
CEC 16

Patricia Tudosa  
NYC Charter School Center

Ayisha Irfan  
Manhattan Borough President Office

Danielle Castaldi-Micca  
National Institution for Reproductive Health

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

Pat Maloney  
Inwood House Children's Village

Amy Schwartz  
WCC

Francisco Ramirez  
Planned Parenthood NYC

Aviva Zadoff  
National Council on Jewish Women

Natasha Capers  
Coalition for Educational Justice

Celia Green  
D75 CEJ

O'Cynthia Williams  
CEJ

Natalie McCabe Zwerger  
NYU Metro Center

Roberto Soto-Carrion  
Border Crossers

Stephanie Zapata [sp?]  
Teens of TORCH

Elaine Paredes  
Young Women's Initiative

Angelique Beluso  
Young Women's Advisory Council of Young Women's  
Initiative

Anna Garrison-Bidel  
NYCLU Teen Activist Project

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

Mariama Ceila [sp?]  
Planned Parenthood

Josh Thomases  
Bank Street College

Veronica Benavides  
Bank Street College

Debbie Almontaser  
Bridging Cultures Gap

Mustafa Sullivan  
Fierce NYC

Claribel Marmol  
Commission Healthcare Network

Rachel Morgan Peters  
Peer Health Exchange

Marissa Munoz  
Hispanic Federation

David Jay  
Asexual Visibility and Educator Network

Elizabeth Munsky  
Live Out Loud

JD Valladares-Williams  
Live Out Loud

Jaleel Francis  
Children's Defense Fund New York

Katherine Chambers  
Project Reach

Deborah Levine  
ACRIA

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

Jacqueline Matusa [sp?]  
SEANYC

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Good afternoon, and  
3 welcome to today's Education Committee Hearing.  
4 Today we are hearing legislation covering three  
5 different topics, each of which is vital to ensuring  
6 City students have a solid educational foundation,  
7 sexual health Education, gifted and talented  
8 programs, and culturally responsive education. I'm  
9 going to make a few opening remarks, and then we'll  
10 hear from the sponsors of the legislation. Proposed  
11 Intro Number 1028A, sponsored by Council Member  
12 Cumbo, would create a sexual health education  
13 taskforce that would review the current state of  
14 sexual health education in City schools, including  
15 whether sexual health education is age-appropriate,  
16 medically accurate, addresses issues particular to  
17 the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning  
18 community, and meets nation standards. Comprehensive  
19 sexual health education is critical to development.  
20 While young people of course learn about their health  
21 from their parents and guardians, they are also  
22 bombarded with messages about sexual health and  
23 sexuality, some more negative than others from  
24 multiple other sources in the news and media. Since  
25 2011, New York City has required sexual health

1  
2 education in middle and high school. The taskforce  
3 would help us to better understand whether the City  
4 is meeting that mandate, how many students are  
5 receiving this vital health information, and any  
6 possible areas for improvement and expansion. We  
7 will also hear testimony on Intro Number 1347  
8 sponsored by Council Member Cornegy, which would  
9 require the Department of Education to distribute  
10 information on gifted and talented programs when it  
11 distributes information about Universal Pre-  
12 Kindergarten. Gifted and talented programs have  
13 received increased attention recently as the Brooklyn  
14 and Bronx Borough Presidents announced the creation  
15 of a taskforce to study issues related to GNT. This  
16 bill would increase outreach to make families aware  
17 of GNT options and the application process. Finally,  
18 we'll also hear testimony on Resolution Number 1415  
19 sponsored by Council Member Palma and the Speaker.  
20 Reso. 1415 calls on the New York State Department of  
21 Education to convene a taskforce to assess the  
22 cultural relevance of state learning standards across  
23 subject areas in elementary, middle and high school  
24 and explore the grounding of standards and core  
25 content that challenge racism, ableism and sexism,

1  
2 and that affirms the experience of lesbian, gay,  
3 bisexual, transgender and gender non-conforming  
4 individuals. While this Resolution focusing on  
5 learning standards, it's important to note that  
6 culturally responsive education, or CRE, is a  
7 pedagogy that goes beyond curriculum, including how  
8 teachers engage with their students. CRE includes a  
9 focus on social justice and teaches students how to  
10 think critically about issues like discrimination and  
11 harassment. As a former educator, I strongly believe  
12 that all students deserve to learn about role models  
13 who share their identities across all subject areas  
14 and throughout the school year. Further, at this  
15 moment in history, students need the critical  
16 thinking skills necessary to challenge injustices,  
17 whether on the playground, in their classroom, in  
18 their communities, or in society at large. The  
19 committee looks forward to hearing testimony on all  
20 these important pieces of legislation. Everyone who  
21 wishes to testify today must fill out a witness slip  
22 which is located on the desk of the Sergeant at Arms  
23 in the front of the room. Please indicate on the  
24 witness slip which legislation you wish to testify  
25 on, and whether you're here to testify in favor or in



1  
2 opposition to that legislation. I want to point out,  
3 however, that we will not be voting on this  
4 legislation today as this is just the first hearing.  
5 To allow as many people as possible to testify,  
6 testimony will be limited three minutes per person,  
7 and please note that all witnesses will be sworn in  
8 before testifying. And let me just also state that  
9 the issue of cultural relevance is one that's very  
10 important to me as a former New York City public  
11 school teacher. I taught at PS199Q in the beginning  
12 of 1984, and I remember unfortunately as I got more  
13 and more South Asian students into the school, I had  
14 a student, a young woman, a young girl-- because I  
15 taught fourth grade-- who came in with mehndi on her  
16 hands which is the henna, and her mother or somebody  
17 had drawn beautiful design on her hand. And you  
18 know, I had always been taught when I was in school  
19 don't write on your hand. How many people remember  
20 the teacher saying don't write on your hand? And I  
21 said to the girl, "You shouldn't write on your hand,"  
22 because I didn't understand the cultural relevance of  
23 the mehndi on her hand, and she told me that it was  
24 part of her holiday, and I was like, oh, taken aback.  
25 But then I went out on my own and did a little

1  
2 research to find out what it was all about, and I  
3 think those types of incidents that we want to, you  
4 know, not have to see happen as often in our schools,  
5 or at all, I should say. But that requires education  
6 of the teachers as well, and so I think that's what  
7 we talk about when we talk about a culturally  
8 responsive education also. So, thank you, and I  
9 know-- as I went further down the road I did a little  
10 bit better than asking those types of questions of  
11 students that I didn't understand. Anyway, first  
12 we're going to hear now from Council Member Robert  
13 Cornegy, and then we're going to hear from Council  
14 Member Palma and then Cumbo on their legislation  
15 before the committee today. Council Member Cornegy?

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: Thank you, Chair  
17 Dromm. Once again I want to thank you for your  
18 timely look into legislation that we think is germane  
19 to particularly communities of color. I really  
20 appreciate that. I want to first publicly state that  
21 I believe that this bill is in line with the Mayor's  
22 commitment to education equity through this Universal  
23 Pre-K program which was designed to make sure that  
24 students have an early opportunity to begin the  
25 education process. So, Intro 1347 is a bill that

1 will require that Department of Education to  
2 distribute information regarding the Department's  
3 gifted and talented program and exam with the Pre-K  
4 materials given to parents. This bill is necessary  
5 because minority students are currently  
6 underrepresented amongst those enrolled in gifted and  
7 talented programs in this city. According to Chalk  
8 Beat, District Nine in the Bronx is home to almost  
9 18,000 elementary school students. Only about 55 of  
10 them were enrolled in gifted and talented programs  
11 last year. Moreover, the article says New York  
12 City's gifted programs are starkly segregated by race  
13 and class. A majority of City students are black or  
14 Hispanic, but those students make up only 27 percent  
15 of gifted enrollment. And while 77 percent of  
16 students citywide are poor, the poverty rate in  
17 gifted programs is about 43 percent. These numbers  
18 are unacceptable. As a father and a legislator I've  
19 made it a priority to fight for equal access to  
20 educational programs this city has to offer. Changes  
21 must be made and this is why I drafted this  
22 legislation, to ensure parents of young children are  
23 aware of these programs while their children are  
24 still in Pre-K so that our young minds that are ready  
25

1  
2 for a more complex, academic program are nurtured and  
3 allowed to grow to reach their potential. And as an  
4 aside, I am a father of six children, and I've had a  
5 child in every single aspect of the Department of  
6 Education school system. I've had a child in gifted  
7 and talented. I have a child with an IEP. I've had a  
8 child who left school and got a GED, and I have three  
9 children in Charter. So, I've had-- I've seen the  
10 impact of these programs across an entire family. So  
11 I just want to thank the Committee on Education for  
12 hearing this and thank the Mayor and the  
13 Administration for their commitment to education  
14 parody across the city. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.  
16 Council Member Palma?

17 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: Thank you, Mr.  
18 Chair and the members of this Committee, for  
19 indulging me. I want to thank the Speaker, Rob  
20 Newman, Smira Desmook [sp?], Tersa Nasir [sp?], Aisha  
21 Schramberg [sp?] for working on this Reso. I also  
22 want to thank, like I said before, the committee for  
23 making this a topic of priority. I appreciate the  
24 efficiency in which we are able to hear these pieces  
25 of legislation. I've always felt it was important

1  
2 that our public school students receive a well-  
3 rounded education; therefore it is crucial that our  
4 school curriculum reflects the history and experience  
5 of our African-American, Latino, Asian and other  
6 underrepresented communities. We will do this by  
7 getting our students to think critically of our race  
8 relations, gender discrimination, LGBTGNC-related  
9 issues, and the challenges faced by people with  
10 disabilities. I believe this is a crucial step in  
11 preparing our youth for the life that they will  
12 experience outside of the classroom, and while I know  
13 that DOE doesn't usually comment on Reso.'s, I'm  
14 confident that this Administration shares the goals  
15 of this Reso as well as the goals that this Council  
16 has in making sure that we have an education system  
17 that serves everyone in New York City. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much,  
19 and we've just been joined by Council Member Cumbo,  
20 but let me introduce the other members who are here,  
21 Council Member Dan Garodnick from Manhattan, Council  
22 Member Palma, of course she's already spoken, Council  
23 Member Chaim Deutsch from Brooklyn, Council Member  
24 Robert Cornegy, Council Member Vinnie Gentile, and  
25

1 Council Member Laurie Cumbo. Are you ready for your  
2 statement, Council Member? Okay.

3  
4 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Thank you so much,  
5 Chair Dromm. As Chair of the Committee on Women's  
6 Issues and Co-Chair of the Women's Caucus, one of the  
7 top priorities for me has been to change the face of  
8 sexual education in the City of New York and embrace  
9 a comprehensive sex ed. curriculum in our schools.  
10 Growing up in Brooklyn and as a teen in the 90's, I  
11 remember so clearly those exciting youth moments. I  
12 cherished and really looked forward to my days spent  
13 with friends growing up in East Flatbush and coming  
14 home to watch Video Music Box hosted by Ralph  
15 McDaniel's just to get a glimpse of the hip-hop  
16 cultural scene, the venues, the clothing, the dance  
17 moves, and everything that made Brooklyn, New York  
18 what it is today. I enjoyed hanging out at Fulton  
19 Mall. I enjoyed the shopping. I enjoyed all of  
20 those great things, but just as I lived as a  
21 teenager, I recall what it felt like to be surrounded  
22 by pressures and hard decisions that I had to make  
23 about relationships and whether to pursue next steps  
24 with a boyfriend or just hold off altogether. I also  
25 recall that during my youth and in school there was

1 an incredible lack and void of any sex education or  
2 even a sprinkling of health-related reproductive  
3 conversations. Most of what we learned about sex  
4 education came from friends, or as many people would  
5 say, "from the streets." After years of increases in  
6 the 1970s and 1980s, the teen pregnancy rate peaked  
7 in 1990 and has declined steadily since. What had  
8 become a reality for many young people around me, it  
9 was also echoed on a national scale with a nine  
10 percent rise from 1985 to 1990. Teen pregnancy rates  
11 reached finally a climax and a turning point in 1991  
12 to finally decline. Today, teen pregnancy, birth and  
13 abortion rates have reached historic lows. What is  
14 more, teen pregnancy rates have fallen in all 50  
15 states and among all racial and ethnic groups. But  
16 although teenage pregnancies are declining overall,  
17 teens in the highest poverty neighborhoods are still  
18 more likely to become pregnant compared with teens in  
19 other lowest poverty neighborhoods. About nine in 10  
20 teen pregnancies in New York City are unintended.  
21 Teenage mothers are less likely to graduate high  
22 school, thereby increasing likelihood of continuing  
23 to live and raise their child in poverty. Quality  
24 sexual reproductive health services and education are  
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1  
2 essential to these young women. Experts point to the  
3 AIDS crisis in America and the impact of AIDS  
4 education programs over the last several decades as  
5 having played a role in persuading more teens to use  
6 condoms. In the early 1990's, a handful of highly  
7 visible people living with HIV such as sports figure  
8 Magic Johnson, mother and activist Elizabeth Glaser  
9 [sp?], and teenage Ryan White helped raise public  
10 awareness of HIV and the need for HIV research and  
11 public education to address the epidemic. Concerns  
12 about AIDS led to changes in perceptions about  
13 condoms and increased usage of condoms. While HIV  
14 and AIDS statistics are dropping drastically, I am  
15 very concerned about the alarming rates in my very  
16 own central Brooklyn. Bedford-Stuyvesant and Crown  
17 Heights unfortunately lead the City in new HIV  
18 infections according to data released by the Health  
19 Department within the past year. Comprehensive sex  
20 education is needed now more than ever. According to  
21 the American Academy of Pediatrics, kids are starting  
22 to date earlier than ever before, and if you can  
23 imagine the average child is dating now at the age of  
24 12 and a half years of age for girls and 13 and a  
25 half for boys. While arguments can be made about age



1  
2 appropriateness, the truth is it happens. Just this  
3 fall, sadly, I recall receiving some key take-aways  
4 from a briefing phone call from our friends at DOE in  
5 November. The key point that stuck with me was that  
6 even with my reporting bill, which was intended to  
7 require the New York City Department of Education to  
8 report annually information regarding school  
9 compliance with state regulations governing health  
10 education and HIV/AIDS education for students in  
11 grades six through 12, there was still incredibly  
12 troublesome data which was very vague and it had  
13 seemed that there was no improvement in DOE findings.  
14 I do recall that not all but part of their plans to  
15 implement the new curriculum was rolled out, but what  
16 our office did learn was that there was no  
17 significant change. Although HIV/AIDS education has  
18 been required since 1987, to this date we still have  
19 no real sense of what the status is on New York  
20 City's implementation. It is essential that Enacted  
21 Law 2016-014 will be bring greater clarity to ensure  
22 that schools and teachers are held accountable to  
23 teaching the curriculum which was the previous bill I  
24 just spoke about. Today, I am proud to speak on  
25 Intro 1028 which is a bill intended to create a

1 sexual health education taskforce. This bill was  
2 conceived of during the time of the 2016/2014 which  
3 is now enacted into law. This bill requires DOE to  
4 report information regarding comprehensive health  
5 education. Intro 1028 which would require the  
6 creation of sexual health education taskforce builds  
7 on the foundation that I began with, Intro 952 which  
8 is now noted, a bill that I introduced to standardize  
9 sex education in public schools. In order to truly  
10 change the face of sex education in the City of New  
11 York, it was clear to me that it was not solely about  
12 creating legislation that holds schools accountable  
13 by requesting reporting data, but actually re-  
14 envisioning what sex education could be in New York  
15 City. By doing this we are supporting teachers,  
16 administrators, students, and families by re-  
17 examining the current curriculum and improving it so  
18 it is laden with best practices and is reflective of  
19 our student body across the five boroughs. It is  
20 essential that diverse and multidisciplinary  
21 perspectives are employed when creating a curriculum  
22 and teaching about human sexuality, ranging from the  
23 biology of sexuality to sexual health education,  
24 gender identity and gender expression, and healthy  
25

1 relationships. We must be a city that is leading a  
2 movement in high-quality health and sex education,  
3 because we must entrust our young people to make  
4 informed and safe decisions. As adults, we must pave  
5 the way and provide them with knowledge to succeed.  
6 The taskforce will be made up of individuals that  
7 represent a spectrum of beliefs and backgrounds,  
8 ages, various career level and life experiences in  
9 order to allow for a representative curriculum. It  
10 is important that these individuals are committed to  
11 bringing best practices that have been developed both  
12 nationally and abroad. Thank you, Chair Dromm, for  
13 allowing me to be a part of this hearing today.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much,  
15 Council Member Cumbo, and I'm going to now-- we've  
16 been joined by Council Member Ben Kallos, and I'm  
17 going to now swear in the first panel: Sister [sic]  
18 Laura Feijoo, Elizabeth Rose, Robert Sanft, and  
19 Lindsey Harr, New York City Department of Education.  
20 So I can ask you to raise your right hand, please?  
21 Do you solemnly swear or affirm to tell the truth,  
22 the whole truth and nothing but the truth and to  
23 answer Council Member questions honestly?  
24

25 UNIDENTIFIED: I do.

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UNIDENTIFIED: I do.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, and would you like to begin I guess, Deputy Chancellor Rose.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: Thank you. Good afternoon, Chair Dromm and all the members of the Education Committee here today. I am Elizabeth Rose, Deputy Chancellor for Operations at the New York City Department of Education. Joining me are Doctor Laura Feijoo, Senior Supervising Superintendent in DOE's Office of School Support and Supervision, and Lindsey Harr, Executive Director of the DOE's Office of School Wellness Programs. We appreciate the opportunity to discuss our work to support sexual health education as part of comprehensive health education in New York City public schools and to comment on Proposed Intro Number 1028A which requires the Mayor to establish a sexual health education taskforce. New York City is proud that we mandate the inclusion of sexual health topics as part of the one-semester health class required for middle and high school students. The inclusion of sexual health education goes beyond the New York State requirement for comprehensive health education and is something we have mandated since 2011. Comprehensive medically

1  
2 accurate and age-appropriate health education from  
3 kindergarten through high school is a critical part  
4 of a student's education. To succeed in the  
5 classroom and in society, students must be prepared  
6 to make healthy, informed choices, develop nurturing  
7 relationships and thrive in a diverse and challenging  
8 world. New York State requires health education at  
9 each grade level. In the elementary grades, health  
10 education must be provided every year, either  
11 incorporated into regular classroom instruction or  
12 delivered by a cluster teacher. In middle school and  
13 again in high school students are required to have  
14 one semester-long comprehensive health education  
15 course with 54 hours of instruction provided by a  
16 certified health education teacher. In grades K-12  
17 students must also receive lessons each year on  
18 HIV/AIDS, five lessons each year in grades K through  
19 six, and six lessons each year in grades seven  
20 through 12. To support health education instruction  
21 including sexual health topics, the DOE recommends  
22 curricula that align with the National Health  
23 Education Standards, New York Health Education  
24 Standards, and National Sexuality Education  
25 Standards. These curricula are developed by experts

1 and are regularly reviewed and updated. In middle  
2 and high school, our recommended curricula are  
3 research-based and meet the Centers for Disease  
4 Control and Prevention's 15 characteristics of  
5 effective health education. While DOE policy permits  
6 schools to select their curricula in all subject  
7 areas, we recommend these expert-developed national  
8 health curricula to make it easy for teachers and  
9 administrators to provide standards-based, age-  
10 appropriate, medically accurate health instruction  
11 for all students. The DOE currently recommends the  
12 following curricula: For high schools, High School  
13 Health Smart, reducing the risk and evidence-based  
14 sexual health curriculum, and understanding self-  
15 identity which complements reducing the risk to  
16 support the inclusion of LGBTQ youth. For middle  
17 schools, a combination of Middle School Health Smart  
18 and selected lessons from Draw the Line, Respect the  
19 Line, which is a sexual health curriculum; and in  
20 elementary schools, Health Teacher as well as a pilot  
21 of an evidence-based curriculum, the Great Body Shop  
22 which includes lessons aligned to National Sexuality  
23 Education Standards. In all grades, the DOE HIV/AIDS  
24 curriculum provides the required annual HIV lessons  
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1  
2 for grades-- students in grades K through 12<sup>th</sup>. Our  
3 curricula include age-appropriate lessons about  
4 identity, respect for self and others, and healthy  
5 relationships. Training and additional resources  
6 help teachers provide health lessons that are LGBTQ-  
7 affirming and inclusive all students. In addition,  
8 since 2015, male and female condom demonstrations are  
9 allowed in high school health education class,  
10 because we know that correct and consistent condom  
11 use is key to preventing unintended pregnancy, HIV  
12 and other STIs. The High School Condom Availability  
13 Program offers high school students access to free  
14 condoms and supports from specially trained school  
15 staff. Within each of our recommended curricula,  
16 students have opportunities to develop skills related  
17 to communication and relationships, setting and  
18 protecting boundaries, negotiation, stress  
19 management, advocacy, goal setting, and resisting  
20 negative social pressures. They apply those skills  
21 as they learn about specific topics including sexual  
22 health, gender identity, sexual orientation, violence  
23 and injury prevention, emotional and mental health,  
24 and more. The DOE recognizes the importance of  
25 individual values and the wide range of diversity in

1  
2 our families. Parents can opt their children out of  
3 certain prevention lessons, but not out of all sexual  
4 health lessons. To identify the best curricula and  
5 make these recommendations, we engage in a formal  
6 review process with education and medical experts and  
7 in consultation with parents and community members.  
8 We work with these stakeholders to evaluate and  
9 identify curricula that are aligned with state and  
10 national standards. Here's one example of how this  
11 review and recommendation process works: The DOE  
12 Office of School Wellness Programs convened a review  
13 committee over five days in December 2015 and January  
14 2016 at the LGBTQ Center in Manhattan to make an  
15 updated recommendation for the elementary health  
16 curriculum. A State Health Education expert led the  
17 review committee with 33 participants, including  
18 teachers, parents, DOE staff, Department of Health  
19 and Mental Hygiene staff, and other experts including  
20 representatives from Planned Parenthood New York  
21 City, Teacher's College, Peer Health Exchange, and  
22 other organizations. All participants were trained  
23 on health education standards and the use of a health  
24 curriculum assessment tool to evaluate a range of  
25 research-based curricula. As a result of that



1  
2 review, DOE is piloting a new K-5 health education  
3 curriculum in selected elementary schools this year  
4 and will use teacher and administrator feedback to  
5 inform next steps. To further strengthen our  
6 engagement of stakeholders and experts and as part of  
7 our five-year CDC grant to focus on improving sexual  
8 health education programs and policies, we're in the  
9 process of establishing a standing committee that can  
10 work with us on an ongoing basis to review additional  
11 health education resources, share strategies for  
12 implementation and promote the curriculum materials  
13 and supports that are available to help schools  
14 provide high-quality health and sexual health  
15 education. Our first annual report on health  
16 education instruction submitted to the City Council  
17 last fall has helped us raise awareness of the gaps  
18 in implementation that still persist. While the  
19 report showed that virtually all of last year's 12<sup>th</sup>  
20 graders met the high school health education  
21 requirements, only 57 percent of eighth graders had  
22 the required course. The report also showed that  
23 last year there were 153 licensed health educators  
24 teaching in New York City schools, about five percent  
25 of the total number assigned to teach health

1 instruction. We provide free training in curricula  
2 citywide throughout the year to help teachers be  
3 prepared, comfortable and knowledgeable to provide  
4 health instruction. We are also ramping up how we  
5 used national CDC surveys to track health and sexual  
6 health education needs over time-- trends over time.  
7 In the most recent administration of the Youth Risk  
8 Behavior Survey which is completed by a  
9 representative sample of high school students, we  
10 asked two new questions to capture in what grade and  
11 setting students learned about sexual health topics,  
12 two key pieces of information on what students report  
13 experiencing in our schools. This and other data  
14 will be shared with superintendents and principals to  
15 highlight trends in risk behavior as well as student  
16 supports. We have also strengthened our recent  
17 administration of the CDC's School Health Profile  
18 Survey which captures more detailed information on  
19 the provision of health education from a  
20 representative sample of secondary principals and  
21 teachers from more than 400 city schools. Data  
22 analysis from the collective responses of students,  
23 administrators and educators along with health  
24 education reporting data should give us a more  
25

1 comprehensive picture of health education including  
2 sexual health than what we previously have had. We  
3 recognize that we have more work to do to address  
4 these challenges and to assure that schools are  
5 prepared and supported in providing health and sexual  
6 health education. To that end, we are convening  
7 principal focus groups to learn more about the  
8 challenges and successes in providing health  
9 education, working with superintendents and field  
10 support centers staff to foster stronger  
11 understanding of and support for health and sexual  
12 health education requirements, exploring options to  
13 increase teacher training opportunities, and  
14 providing schools with tools to better engage  
15 families on these important topics. I would now like  
16 to turn to the proposed legislation. Intro Number  
17 1028A requires the Mayor to appoint members to a  
18 sexual health education taskforce to review both  
19 DOE's recommended sexual health education curricula  
20 and the implementation of sexual health education at  
21 all grade levels. We share the Council's goal of  
22 ensuring that all students receive high-quality  
23 sexual health education that is inclusive, standards-  
24 based, and age appropriate, but any taskforce should  
25

1  
2 build on, not duplicate work already being done by  
3 the DOE in this area. We believe that curriculum  
4 review is best done by professional educators and  
5 falls within the purview of the DOE. Additionally, I  
6 would be remiss if I did not caution that there are  
7 several operational concerns that would confront the  
8 taskforce as currently described in the legislation.  
9 In particular, it would be extremely burdensome if  
10 not impossible for a taskforce to review  
11 implementation of curriculum at 1,600 schools, given  
12 that our data system only captures scheduling of  
13 courses, not individual topics within courses. This  
14 is the case in all subject areas, not just health.  
15 Much as we cannot track when a Social Studies  
16 educator teaches a particular topic in history, we  
17 cannot track when a teacher teaches sexual health  
18 education, a topic which is a part of a comprehensive  
19 health education course. With that said, we welcome  
20 the opportunity to meet with the Council to share  
21 further details about our curricula review process  
22 and outcomes which have led to our current selection  
23 of national, research-based curricula. We believe  
24 that the taskforce could play a beneficial role in  
25 helping families and communities better understand

1  
2 what age-appropriate standards-based health sexual  
3 health instruction is, why it is a critical component  
4 of every child's education, and what curricula,  
5 resources and supports exist to help schools provide  
6 equitable access to health instruction. By providing  
7 an analysis of the health education data we report to  
8 the council in combination with the other public  
9 health data, the DOE and New York City Department of  
10 Health and Mental Hygiene jointly collect such as  
11 data from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey and school  
12 health profiles. This taskforce can be a strong ally  
13 for the necessity of comprehensive health and sexual  
14 health education. Furthermore, the taskforce can  
15 provide a much needed platform for community members,  
16 including parents and students to articulate why  
17 sexual health instruction is so critical to the  
18 health, safety and success of our students. We know  
19 that we have work ahead of us in order to ensure that  
20 all students are receiving high-quality health  
21 education. We appreciate the Council's leadership  
22 and partnership on these important issues, and we  
23 look forward to further discussions with the Council  
24 on this legislation. Thank you for your attention,  
25 and now you'll hear from my colleague, Robert Sanft.

ROBERT SANFT: Thank you, Elizabeth.

Good afternoon, Chair Dromm and member of the Education Committee here today. My name is Robert Sanft and I am Chief Executive Officer of the Office of Student Enrollment at the New York City Department of Education. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Intro Number 1347 which requires the DOE to include information regarding the gifted and talented GNT examination and programs along with Pre-K for All materials given to parents. Gifted and talented programs are one way that DOE supports the needs of students in every district. These programs deliver accelerated instruction aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. Eligibility for a DOE citywide GNT school or a district GNT program is based on a student's score on the GNT test. The current GNT test includes both a verbal and nonverbal section. The current GNT test includes both a verbal and nonverbal section. The Otis-Lennon School Ability Test or OLSAT that tests verbal reasoning, comprehension and receptive language abilities and the Naglieri Non-Verbal Ability Test that examines non-verbal critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. We continually review ways to ensure the

1  
2 GN tests are equitable and maintain the high  
3 standards of the program. The test is offered  
4 annually and students must complete a request for  
5 testing or RFT application in the fall in order to  
6 take the test. As you already know, we now have GNT  
7 programs located in every district for the first time  
8 in over five years. For the 2016/2017 school year,  
9 we opened new third grade GNT classes in community  
10 school district seven, 12, 16, and 23, each of which  
11 did not previously have GNT programs. For these  
12 particular programs, students are admitted based on  
13 multiple measures centered on research-aligned  
14 indicators for success in gifted programs. These  
15 indicators include demonstrated academic performance  
16 based on report card grades, attendance and gifted  
17 behavior indicators such as being highly curious,  
18 motivated and a fast learner. We take a number of  
19 steps to ensure that families have access to all of  
20 the information they need to find a high-quality  
21 elementary school option that best meets their  
22 child's needs, including information on the GNT test  
23 and programs. To support this effort, we have  
24 developed a comprehensive family outreach strategy.  
25 Each year we publish and translate into nine

1  
2 languages a kindergarten directory and a GNT handbook  
3 that include important information for parents.

4 These publications are distributed directly to all

5 Pre-K for All sites including New York City Early

6 Education Centers, elementary schools and standalone

7 pre-k centers along with sexual shelters and

8 libraries. These resources are also available at

9 superintendent's offices and the 12 Family Welcome

10 Centers across New York City. Family Welcome Center

11 staff are able to assist all families with elementary

12 school applications and request for testing.

13 Electronic versions of the kindergarten director and

14 GNT handbook are also available in English and the

15 nine translated languages on our website. All

16 families may sign up for admissions information and

17 updates via an email service. Additionally, key

18 announcements are posted via Facebook, Twitter and on

19 our website. Lastly, we work with school-based

20 staff, community organizations, shelters, and

21 libraries to distribute admissions information as

22 well. In addition to our standard publications, for

23 the first time this fall, the DOE mailed post cards

24 with information on the GNT RFT process to all

25 families of students enrolled in Pre-K. These



1 postcards provided essential information about  
2 requesting testing. This year we also piloted new  
3 its Elementary school admissions events for families.  
4 In place of separate borough-wide pre-k, kindergarten  
5 and GNT events we held 32 district-based events.  
6 These family events consisted of presentations about  
7 all three elementary school admissions processes as  
8 well as opportunities to ask questions, work with DOE  
9 staff to find your zone school and other school  
10 options, and complete a GNT request for testing.  
11 Parents are more likely to learn about GNT when it is  
12 presented at the same event as pre-k and kindergarten  
13 information. We have interpretation services  
14 available at all public DOE admissions events  
15 including the ITs Elementary events. Additionally,  
16 we recently implemented a new initiative in  
17 partnership with the Department of Homeless Services  
18 and the Human Resources Administration to encourage  
19 incoming pre-k and kindergarten students to submit a  
20 request for testing at their shelter. We train  
21 shelter staff and DOE family assistants to engage and  
22 support families in this process. Our efforts having  
23 an impact. This year we saw an increase in the  
24 number of students entering kindergarten who took the  
25

1  
2 test; 16,582 tested in the 2016/2017 school year,  
3 whereas 14,477 tested in the 2015/2016 school year,  
4 an increase of 14.5 percent. In particular, the  
5 number of the students entering kindergarten and  
6 testing increased in all six community school  
7 districts in the Bronx and in 10 of 12 community  
8 school districts in Brooklyn. However, the number of  
9 students entering kindergarten with eligible scores  
10 did not increase citywide nor in these districts.  
11 Finally, with respect to the proposed legislation, we  
12 support the goal of ensuring that families of pre-k  
13 students are aware of GNT testing opportunities. I  
14 would like to thank Council Member Cornegy in  
15 particular for this leadership and partnership on  
16 this issue. We look forward to building on our  
17 successes and working with families, communities and  
18 the City Council to ensure that all students have  
19 equal access to the highest quality education. Thank  
20 you.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you very  
22 much. Let me just say we've been joined by Council  
23 Member Alan Maisel and Council Member Mark Treyger,  
24 and Helen Chin-- Margaret Chin. My friend is Helen  
25 Chin. Margaret Chin, I'm sorry. And Council Member

1  
2 Inez Barron, also. I'm curious to know because one  
3 of the complaints that we get often in the Council in  
4 regards to the teaching of sex education and health  
5 education actually in general is that it's often not  
6 done until the last semester in school, and if it's  
7 done it also often times doesn't include the sex  
8 education component. So, do you have any idea or  
9 statistics to say or for us to know when-- I see in  
10 the testimony, Chancellor Rose, that you mentioned  
11 that virtually all of last year's 12<sup>th</sup> graders meet  
12 the high school health education requirements. Do we  
13 know when that's taught, and do we have any idea of  
14 what is actually taught, if the sex education is  
15 taught as part the health education?

16 LAURA FEIJOO: So, the requirement is  
17 that there's a half a unit in middle school and half  
18 a unit in high school.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Is that mic on? It  
20 should have a red light.

21 LAURA FEIJOO: Any better?

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah.

23 LAURA FEIJOO: I can use my big cafeteria  
24 voice.

25

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah, okay. And also  
3 state your name for the record.

4 LAURA FEIJOO: Laura Feijoo. So, half a  
5 unit is required in middle school and a half a unit  
6 is required in high school. And so, I don't know  
7 that we have statistics necessarily on what year  
8 they're taught. Lindsey could speak to that. But  
9 the choice about programing is up to the school to be  
10 able to program into the schedule. I think Deputy  
11 Chancellor Rose did testify in terms of any mandated  
12 curriculum, any particular unit. It is a requirement  
13 of the school to ensure all the lessons appropriate  
14 for that syllabus or curriculum or scope and sequence  
15 are taught within that content.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, do students  
17 receive a mark on their report card for health  
18 education?

19 LAURA FEIJOO: They receive a grade  
20 dependent on the school.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: A grade.

22 LAURA FEIJOO: For every course they're  
23 taught. So,--

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Does that carry down  
25 to elementary school as well?

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LAURA FEIJOO: Well, in elementary--

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: In elementary school there is requirement for HIV/AIDS lessons and that is-- it does not appear on a students' report card, but schools are required to confirm that the lessons were taught.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, if I recall correctly, I think that there is on the elementary school report card a section for health education, am I wrong on that?

LAURA FEIJOO: So, I don't know that we have one mandated report card across the entire--

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: We do not.

LAURA FEIJOO: system for all grades and all one. So I want to say any course a student takes it would be expected that they would get a grade for. I don't know specific-- I know specifically for the individual lessons you wouldn't get a separate grade for those lessons, but any course or class that a student takes on a report card, they would likely get a grade.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, what I'm trying to get at is if it's being taught, there must be a

1 way to find out when it's being taught and what the  
2 content is.

3  
4 LAURA FEIJOO: So, the content is what we  
5 mandate, right? We provide a content and curriculum  
6 for math, for social studies. The teacher is  
7 responsible to teach the entire curriculum.  
8 Assistant Principals monitor the curriculum, and we  
9 make sure that the scope and sequence that's required  
10 for any class. I know we're talking specifically  
11 about health, but it's taught within the context of  
12 what the curriculum is. I would agree that if a  
13 class is taught, the course is taught, there would be  
14 a grade, and we track those classes in a system where  
15 we know when the classes are taught. I'm not sure if  
16 we have the data available to say exactly what  
17 semester each class is taught on for health ed. to be  
18 able to answer the particular question, how many  
19 times is it taught in 12<sup>th</sup> grade versus 11<sup>th</sup> grade  
20 versus eighth grade. I think we'd have to get back  
21 to you on what semester.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah, and I'm  
23 interested in that because, you know, to me I  
24 actually think it should be taught much earlier. I  
25 think many of our students are sexually active. I

1  
2 don't have the number of students who are sexually  
3 active by 12<sup>th</sup> grade, but I'm sure that the numbers  
4 are fairly high from my estimation, and if they're  
5 only getting sex education at the last semester of  
6 high school, it's not really beneficial to them.

7           LAURA FEIJOO: And we could certainly  
8 agree that if you're talking about prevention, the  
9 sooner the better. Anytime you talk about preventive  
10 measures you want to have the most age appropriate  
11 and the most accurate information to students at the  
12 earliest time possible.

13           DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: And we do  
14 strongly recommend to schools that the course is  
15 taught in sixth or seventh grade in middle schools  
16 and in ninth or tenth grade for high schools.

17           CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And I think one of  
18 the ideas that the Speaker had in mind and also our  
19 esteemed Council Member Cumbo as well in terms of  
20 wanting to form this taskforce was to begin to work  
21 on a way to find out exactly when the coursework is  
22 being taught and what type of assurances there are  
23 that the sex ed. component is being taught within the  
24 framework of health education. So, I'm also curious  
25 to know how do we track or enforce, for a lack of a

1  
2 better word from the top of my mind right now, the  
3 face of HIV education being taught in the schools.  
4 How do we track that, and why is that different than  
5 the way that we track the sex education component?

6 LAURA FEIJOO: So, the HIV/AIDS is  
7 tracked by principals' response to the fact-- I guess  
8 you call it at testation [sic] that it's taught  
9 within those lessons, and this is a required part of  
10 education. So, I'm not sure if there's a box  
11 specific to this.

12 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: So, one thing I  
13 would add is the HIV/AIDS lessons are required each  
14 year and are therefore in many grades taught outside  
15 of the context of a course, and so there is a  
16 separate, effectively, a checkbox for schools to  
17 affirm or attest that these lessons are in fact being  
18 taught, and those would not necessarily again appear  
19 on a report card because they are outside of the  
20 context of a course.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So for myself when I  
22 was teaching, often times health education was taught  
23 by the Phys. Ed. teacher, for example, but HIV/AIDS  
24 was taught in District 24 at that time anyway by a  
25



1 specialist in the HIV/AIDS curriculum. Is that what  
2 you're referring to?

3  
4 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: So the who  
5 teaches the HIV/AIDS, I'm going to defer to my  
6 colleagues. It can-- both of these can be taught by  
7 a variety of different teachers. There's not  
8 necessarily a Phys. Ed. teacher or the classroom  
9 teacher, but schools do have discretion.

10 LAURA FEIJOO: And the teachers, there's  
11 training that they typically--

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] I'm  
13 sorry, I can't hear you, Ms. Feijoo.

14 LAURA FEIJOO: in addition, there's  
15 training available for teachers if it's not their  
16 area to be able to be trained, and I think they  
17 trained a number of teachers last year in both the  
18 health curriculum, HIV/AIDS and the sex ed.  
19 curriculum.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, I do have some  
21 questions about the teachers as well. The recent  
22 released health education data in response to Local  
23 Law 14 and 15 in 2016 included new information about  
24 the number of teachers that are teaching health  
25 education in New York City schools; 15,397 unique

1  
2 instructors, yet only 153 are licensed health  
3 educators, and only 7.6 percent of instructors have  
4 attended any training on sexual health education.

5 Are those the numbers that you have, and what are we  
6 doing to change that, to improve that?

7 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: Well, let's talk  
8 through some of those different numbers. Of the  
9 total number of teachers teaching health education,  
10 the vast majority of those are teachers in elementary  
11 school. About 12,000 of them are teachers in  
12 elementary grades, and that makes sense because what  
13 we typically see is health education is incorporated  
14 into the main classroom teachers' lesson plan over  
15 the course of the year. So that helps get you to  
16 explain that large number. At the middle school and  
17 high school levels, we have a number of teachers  
18 teaching health education, some of them licensed,  
19 some of them teaching the course, and I'm now going  
20 to blank on the term, but all teachers are allowed to  
21 teach a course outside of their license area, and so  
22 we ensure-- we provide training for those teachers to  
23 ensure that they have the content knowledge and the  
24 confidence to provide this course.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: In the same Local  
3 Law--

4 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: [interposing]  
5 And I'm sorry, I do want to just add one thing. The  
6 number of teachers that you cited as receiving  
7 training in sex education, the 7.6 percent I believe  
8 is the number of teachers who received training on  
9 health education in the 2015/2016 school year. Over  
10 a two year period, 20 percent of the teachers who are  
11 teaching health education received specific training,  
12 and I'm sure that there were teachers who have  
13 received the training in years prior as well.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And so, in regard to  
15 Local Law 14, it also addressed the fact that LGBT  
16 students and other non-heterosexual sexual  
17 orientations be addressed, but the report in my  
18 opinion was a little bit slim on how that's being  
19 done and the training that's being provided. Can you  
20 talk a little bit more about what you're doing in  
21 regard specifically to the training of teachers  
22 around the issue of LGBT students and their sexual  
23 orientation, gender identities?

24 LINDSEY HARR: Sure. So in all of our  
25 trainings on the recommended curriculum, the

1  
2 recommended curriculum include lessons around gender  
3 identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, and  
4 as part of our trainings we work with teachers around  
5 how to create inclusive affirming classrooms. We also  
6 have trainings that are specifically geared towards  
7 helping teachers at different grade level create  
8 inclusive classrooms, be supportive and help students  
9 learn about LGBTQ topics, and so these are some of  
10 the trainings that Deputy Chancellor Rose mentioned  
11 earlier that we offer free throughout the school  
12 year. So it is both part of our recommended  
13 curriculum which we provide training on, and then we  
14 also have trainings to further help-- to help  
15 teachers further develop their knowledge and skills.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, in many cities  
17 nationwide have implemented K to 12 sexuality  
18 education programs, and I think in your testimony you  
19 mentioned that you launched a pilot program this past  
20 September at several elementary schools. Can you  
21 give us an update, a little bit more specifics on how  
22 that's going?

23 LINDSEY HARR: Yes. So as a result of  
24 our curriculum, our multi-day curriculum review that  
25 we held last school year, we are piloting a national

1 research-based curriculum called The Great Body Shop.  
2 It is aligned with the National Health Education  
3 Standards, National Sexuality Education Standards.  
4 We are so far getting very positive feedback from  
5 teachers and administrators about the curriculum.  
6 We're still gathering that feedback now, but we'll be  
7 using that to make a decision about next steps in  
8 terms of how and if we'll be using it, you know, in a  
9 wider range of schools in the coming school year.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, it's an elementary  
12 curriculum, am I right?

13 LINDSEY HARR: That's correct.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And so what type of  
15 topics are covered on the elementary level?

16 LINDSEY HARR: Well, The Great Body Shop  
17 is a comprehensive health ed. curriculum. So it  
18 covers all of the health ed. topics ranging from  
19 physical activity and nutrition, mental and emotional  
20 health, tobacco, alcohol and other drugs prevention,  
21 and age-appropriate medically accurate lessons that  
22 are aligned with the National Sexuality Education  
23 Standards. So, at the elementary grades these are  
24 things like learning about healthy relationships,  
25 safe and unsafe touching, how to talk with and use a

1  
2 trusted adult as a resource if a child is  
3 uncomfortable with something that's going on,  
4 learning about gender roles in our culture and in  
5 families with a real emphasis on inclusivity, and  
6 helping children learn about different gender  
7 identities and things like that.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And does it cover  
9 topics on child sexual abuse?

10 LINDSEY HARR: Yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And what type of  
12 resources are available should suspected abuse arise  
13 during those lessons?

14 LINDSEY HARR: So, the lessons are  
15 skills-based and focus on helping students understand  
16 that they can and should speak with a trusted adult  
17 if they feel uncomfortable with something that's  
18 going on or they have a friend who feels  
19 uncomfortable with something that's going on, and  
20 then of course in our schools we have mandated  
21 reporters.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: They're mandated  
23 reporters, okay. We understand that the DOE  
24 recommends the Health Smart curriculum for use in  
25

1  
2 middle and high school. How are teachers informed  
3 about the availability of this curriculum?

4 LINDSEY HARR: They are informed through  
5 a variety of ways. We inform both our schools  
6 administrators and our teachers about it through  
7 notices and Principal's Weekly. We have a School  
8 Wellness Weekly email newsletter. It's published on  
9 our website. All our trainings are publicized on the  
10 DOE's website. Those are some of the main ways.  
11 Also, we inform the superintendents and the field  
12 support center folks so that they can share that and  
13 promote that with their schools as well.

14 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: And we actually  
15 try to incentivize schools to use these recommended  
16 curricula, and one of the ways we do that is we will  
17 provide the curricula for free as long-- we just want  
18 the teacher to come and be trained in how to use the  
19 curriculum and how to best provide instruction. We  
20 will give the curriculum away for free.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, a question comes  
22 to mind, and I think it was in your testimony,  
23 Chancellor Rose, when you mentioned that the DOE's  
24 sex education curriculum is a mandated curriculum,  
25 except for some components probably related to the

1 HIV in terms of prevention that are not mandated.  
2 How do we-- how do we gather-- how do we gather  
3 information on whether that has been taught or not?  
4 This continues to be a problem for me in terms of  
5 ensuring. I'm thinking also there may be districts  
6 who for whatever reason don't want to cover certain  
7 topics and just choose to do other parts and not--  
8 let's say for example, LGBT issues, you know, that  
9 would cover heterosexual sex education but not LGBT  
10 sex education as well.

12 LAURA FEIJOO: So what I'm about to say  
13 is not saying that there's not work to be done. I  
14 think there's still work to be done in terms of  
15 ensuring that this happens across the system, but  
16 principals are responsible to ensure all of the  
17 mandates and requirements happen in the school. I'm  
18 not going to, you know, say it's 100 percent the case  
19 right now. You have clear data that we shared and  
20 you shared in terms of work that we still have to do,  
21 but principals are responsible to make sure any topic  
22 is taught in any single course. And so while it's  
23 required and we have a curriculum that's definitely  
24 recommended, once it's been mandated we have to  
25 ensure that, and there are ways that we pull up data



1 and we use the field support center. So they talked  
2 about the availability of information to principals,  
3 Principals Weekly and ways in which we push out  
4 information, but we also gather data in terms of  
5 what's been reported, in terms of courses being  
6 taught, what's identified as a concern. We have a  
7 bunch of ways that we assess compliance with things,  
8 and then that targeted conversations happen with the  
9 field support center in terms of supports,  
10 availability, targeted identification. The schools  
11 should participate in certain program, professional  
12 development, and then reporting up through the field  
13 support centers into the superintendents' office  
14 where there is an escalation protocol not just for  
15 health, but for any compliance measure that doesn't  
16 seem to be taking root at a school. We trust that  
17 principals are doing this, but we also have a system  
18 in which to track the health curriculum or the math  
19 curriculum, but not necessarily whether, you know,  
20 algebraic equations were taught in algebra, but  
21 certainly we expect that to be a part of the course  
22 the same way we do in health.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, I was going to  
25 say, I think about six or eight months ago I brought

1  
2 to your attention the fact that a principal was using  
3 a opt-in letter to send out to her parents in her  
4 school. I don't know if you're aware of that, but I  
5 did bring it to the attention of the DOE, and then  
6 the principal was corrected on the way in which that  
7 letter was written. Do all principals send home  
8 letters informing parents that the sex education  
9 curriculum is about to begin, or how do you deal with  
10 that issue?

11 LAURA FEIJOO: Lindsey can talk about  
12 what the requirement is. I could just talk about  
13 specific incidents. We could never fully account for  
14 all the things that might happen in a school. We  
15 certainly-- when something is brought to our  
16 attention that is out of the usual, we try to address  
17 that immediately straight through the  
18 superintendent's office. So that seems to be maybe a  
19 unique or, you know, uncommon.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, it depends,  
21 because this wasn't the first time I heard about  
22 that, and I think that the communication with the  
23 parents is really, really, really important--

24 LAURA FEIJOO: [interposing] I agree.  
25

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: because that lack of  
3 communication often frightens parents if they don't  
4 know what the contents of the curriculum is going to  
5 be taught--

6 LAURA FEIJOO: [interposing] So, it's  
7 been--

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: if it's age  
9 appropriate, for example.

10 LAURA FEIJOO: It's been my experience  
11 that typically we will send a letter home explaining  
12 things, and if there is any, you know, opt-out  
13 opportunity that we-- it's in the positive unless we  
14 hear the negative. I've not-- you know, I'm glad it  
15 was followed up on and taken care of in terms of the  
16 opt-in.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, should an opt-out  
18 option--

19 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: [interposing] So,  
20 we do--

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: be included then?  
22 I'm sorry, Deputy Chancellor.

23 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: We do have  
24 standard letters for principals to use to send home  
25 to parents. It does include instructions on what a

1  
2 parent would need to do if they wish to opt their  
3 child out. It is not a simple, "Sign the bottom of  
4 the paper and hand it back." They actually have to  
5 write us a letter. So there's a little bit of a more  
6 of a process there for parents to undertake.  
7 Historically, the opt-out percentage is low. It's  
8 typically in the two to three percent range, but we  
9 do have a standard letter for principals to use.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Are there particular  
11 districts where you find the opt-out letter is coming  
12 from?

13 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: I don't think we  
14 have district by district data on that, but that's  
15 something we can look and see if there--

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] It'd be  
17 very interesting to find out--

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: [interposing] If  
19 the data's there.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: where that might be  
21 happening. Alright, I'm going to just turn it over  
22 to my colleague, Council Member Cumbo, who has  
23 questions as well.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Thank you, Chair  
25 Dromm. Your questions were very thorough, many of

1  
2 the ones that I also was going to ask. I still have a  
3 few remaining questions. I guess to get right down  
4 to the point, is gaining a greater understanding  
5 because it seems a little mixed in your testimony.  
6 Are you in support of Intro 1028A?

7 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: So, we are  
8 completely fine with the creation of a taskforce.  
9 What we would really like to discuss is: what should  
10 the focus of the taskforce be. We think that there  
11 are lots of things where we would really welcome and  
12 embrace the Council's help and support and ensuring  
13 that all of our communities do understand how  
14 important sexual health education is. As Chair Dromm  
15 alluded, there are communities in our city that have  
16 a more diverse view and may not be as supportive or  
17 ready for sexual health education in all of our grade  
18 levels. So we do think that there are lots of  
19 valuable things that the Council could bring and that  
20 we would welcome. We think curriculum review is  
21 something that we actually have a pretty good both  
22 process and outcomes on and that there's a lot that  
23 we could do together that would be additive and not  
24 duplicative.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Part of the  
3 purpose of creating 1028A is also in recognizing that  
4 while there is a mandatory curriculum that has been  
5 put forward, its enforcement still remains  
6 questionable. And I wanted to just start in terms of  
7 questions with HIV and AIDS education in the  
8 curriculum, wanting to know. So it states here in  
9 your testimony that there are five lessons each year  
10 in grades K through six and six lessons each year in  
11 grades seven through 12. So what I understand is  
12 that there are different approaches to that, one that  
13 you may bring in outside organizations in order to be  
14 contracted in order to that type of education, HIV  
15 and AIDS, or it could happen internally. What seems  
16 to be the preferred way that HIV and AIDS education  
17 to fulfill the requirements are done, through  
18 contracted organizations or internally through DOE?

19 LINDSEY HARR: So, for both the required  
20 annual HIV/AIDS lessons and the required health  
21 education course those should be taught by the  
22 teacher or teachers in the school. We also have some  
23 really excellent partners working throughout the City  
24 who provide additional and supplemental health and  
25 sexual health education programs, and those are very

1  
2 valuable, and we think that both are a good thing,  
3 but in terms of the core requirements, those should  
4 be provided in a class by a DOE teacher.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: So, if we focus  
6 just on the HIV and AIDS and the requirements there,  
7 what percentage would you say of schools are actually  
8 completing that requirement, and what percentage  
9 obviously are not?

10 LINDSEY HARR: We're not able to say yet,  
11 but as a result of the legislation that the Council  
12 passed last year, the Public--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [interposing]  
14 Correct.

15 LINDSEY HARR: Health Ed. reporting bill,  
16 starting this-- starting in the coming year, we will  
17 be able to report out on the provision of the  
18 HIV/AIDS lessons.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Previous to the  
20 legislation that we passed, did you have any numbers  
21 or a ballpark estimate in terms of how many young  
22 people upon completing 12<sup>th</sup> grade have actually  
23 received that level of education?

24 LINDSEY HARR: So, for those stand-alone  
25 HIV/AIDS lessons, I just want to be clear that I'm

1  
2 talking about those and not the required health  
3 course--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [interposing]  
5 Correct.

6 LINDSEY HARR: Those were-- hadn't yet  
7 been built into the DOE's scheduling tracking system  
8 which is where we get the data about what courses  
9 students have been scheduled for. So that's a new  
10 component of the tracking system that's in  
11 development that we're looking forward to having.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: How do you educate  
13 your teachers in order to be able to provide that  
14 level of education? Is there a system put in place  
15 that would then qualify them for the ability to be  
16 able to provide that type of educational resource to  
17 the students that they're teaching?

18 LINDSEY HARR: Again, with regard to the  
19 HIV/AIDS lessons, specifically?

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Uh-hm.

21 LINDSEY HARR: Our entire HIV/AIDS  
22 curriculum with the mandated lessons for each and  
23 every grade level is available online in its  
24 entirety. Anyone can see it. It's on a public DOE  
25 website, and we also provide free training every year



1  
2 throughout the year to teachers to prepare them to  
3 teach those lessons.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: How many teaches  
5 would you say actually partake in that training, and  
6 is it mandatory of sorts? Or how would a teacher  
7 find themselves? Is it all teachers? Is it a  
8 specific teacher is designated to participate in that  
9 training? How is it actually implemented?

10 LAURA FEIJOO: So, I would just say from  
11 my school-based experience, part of the principal's  
12 responsibility-- so we have science-educated  
13 professionals who may be comfortable with taking on  
14 these lessons that are very specific and doing that.  
15 We may have health professionals in the school,  
16 physical education professionals in the school that  
17 would be very comfortable. It would be-- I think  
18 it's that comfort level and that content that we're  
19 able to deliver well. So, the training I would  
20 imagine went for people who may have not had the same  
21 background or someone who wanted a refresher. We're  
22 not tracking necessarily, you know, a one-to-one  
23 correspondence. We'll have a better tracking system  
24 now being put in place. But I would say it's the  
25 principal's' responsibility to ensure that the

1  
2 content that anyone is teaching is appropriate, but  
3 in this specific case there are some professionals in  
4 the school that are ready to take those lessons and  
5 move forward with them, professional development that  
6 could happen in the school, and then-- and I don't  
7 want to leave that layer out quickly. There is  
8 professional development that schools do on Monday  
9 PDs and opportunities within the school context that  
10 provide professional development, especially with our  
11 contracted partners that may be coming to schools to  
12 do professional development. In addition, Lindsey's  
13 talking about professional development offered  
14 through her office in cooperation with the field  
15 support centers to provide additional layer of  
16 professional development for teachers.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I think-- and I  
18 hear what you're saying on that. To bring it home a  
19 little bit or to switch gears in some way, in my  
20 district in the 35<sup>th</sup> Council District we have a high  
21 school in our district called Benjamin Banneker High  
22 School, and in that particular high school they have  
23 a health clinic where young people can go for condom  
24 demonstrations. They can go for dental work. They  
25 can go for examinations. They can go for questions

1 in terms of related to their reproductive health.  
2  
3 There are a lot of things that can be covered in a  
4 clinic such as this, a school-based clinic. Have  
5 there been any analysis? Because part of the reason  
6 for my focus on this is understanding. If we can  
7 invest the right amount of resources into our young  
8 people as far as giving them the proper tools and  
9 resources to make the healthiest reproductive  
10 decisions for themselves, how does that compare when  
11 we are doing it in some schools in certain  
12 neighborhoods and it's not happening in other  
13 neighborhoods? Do we have an understanding of the  
14 impact that it's having on that student population?  
15 Has there ever been a study to say in these schools--  
16 in let's say Bushwick, for example. Let's say they  
17 are doing HIV training and the curriculum is being  
18 implemented and the work is happening. Whereas  
19 perhaps in my district like in Crown Heights and  
20 Bedford Stuyvesant where we have the largest HIV and  
21 AIDS epidemic, are we understanding the correlation  
22 between young people having that educational  
23 experience or in other neighborhoods where they're  
24 not having it and being able to do a correlation?

1  
2           LAURA FEIJOO: I certainly don't have any  
3 data in front of me, but I do want to address that  
4 point, because I think something that we didn't say  
5 is the Administration's commitment to community  
6 schools and partnerships in that area, and I know  
7 that there is a lot of work being done not only for  
8 the schools that have community schools partnerships  
9 but the campuses and in some cases additional  
10 schools. So, I do think that there is additional  
11 partnerships and resources in community schools and  
12 in the schools that we're able to talk about.

13           DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: You raised a  
14 very important point, Council Member Cumbo, that the  
15 opportunities for a student to engage with an adult  
16 around sexual health issues is not limited to the  
17 health education course or the HIV/AIDS lessons. So  
18 you referenced a clinic in a school. We have about  
19 50 percent of our high school students are in a  
20 school that has either a school-based health center  
21 or a catch program that provides them access to  
22 reproductive healthcare. In addition, all of our  
23 high schools have a condom availability program where  
24 at least 10 periods a week a health resource space is  
25 available to students with trained staff member who

1  
2 can provide them with information and access to  
3 condoms and instruction on how to use them and other  
4 questions that they may have about sexual health.  
5 So, it is not only the health education course that  
6 provides students with support on many of these  
7 topics, but also the condom availability program and  
8 the other health resources that we have in many of  
9 our buildings throughout the City that supplement the  
10 health education course.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Okay. And I just  
12 have one other question because I want to turn it  
13 over to my colleagues, because I know they also have  
14 questions in regards to this. In your testimony you  
15 state that the report also showed that last year  
16 there were 153 licensed health educators teaching in  
17 New York City, about five percent of the total  
18 assigned to teach health education. So, 153 licensed  
19 health educators teaching in New York City schools.  
20 Do we have a ballpark of where that falls in terms of  
21 what the actual need is? So, we have 153, but how  
22 many in the testimony here would actually be needed  
23 in order to provide the level of education and  
24 curriculum implementation throughout the entire City  
25 of New York? Where are we short? Are we reaching

1  
2 our mark? Are we underperforming? What does that  
3 number tell us?

4 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: Well, all  
5 schools have different needs in terms of how they  
6 program and how they staff their schools. What we  
7 want to ensure is that any teacher who is teaching a  
8 health education course has the training and the  
9 curriculum and the knowledge to bring to that course  
10 and do an excellent job, and so our focus is on  
11 providing schools with the support from a  
12 professional development perspective and curriculum  
13 perspective to ensure that all schools can meet that  
14 need in their schools, and whether that is a health  
15 teacher, whether it is a science teacher who also  
16 teaches a health course or other teachers who also  
17 teach a health course, we want to make sure that  
18 those teachers are knowledgeable, confident and are  
19 supported and have the information to teach well.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I think that I  
21 appreciate your support on 1028, but I also want to--  
22 I also want to state that I recognize that we don't  
23 want to duplicate services or we don't want to  
24 duplicate work, but I feel that we're all working  
25 towards the same goal, and I believe that the

1  
2 creation of the taskforce was the ability to create  
3 not necessarily an outside entity, because what's  
4 proposed in terms of who would serve on the taskforce  
5 does include our teachers and guidance counselors and  
6 people within, but it is prudent in order to have an  
7 outside entity in the sense of someone that can  
8 provide an extra set of eyes, an extra set of  
9 experiences, the opportunity to be able to provide  
10 much of the oversight that seems to be missing in  
11 terms of a lot of the answers that we just can't get  
12 today or have been able to get in the past. But I  
13 think that collectively through the taskforce and the  
14 Administration working together with DOE we'll be  
15 able to gain a greater understanding of how to best  
16 provide these services for our young people. So, I  
17 thank you.

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: Thank you. We're  
19 happy to continue conversations with you about the  
20 taskforce.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Council  
22 Member Treyger?

23 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Thank--

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] I want  
25 to say we've been joined also by-- well, were joined

1  
2 by Council Member Salamanca, Reynoso, Rosenthal, and  
3 Rodriguez.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Thank you, Chair  
5 Dromm, and welcome, Deputy Chancellor, everyone. My  
6 question is based on just things I observed while  
7 teaching and really is the DOE doing enough to create  
8 a culture where schools across the board, not on a  
9 school by school basis, but across the board feel  
10 comfortable delving into these subject matters beyond  
11 what is permis-- you know, as far as the mandates?  
12 Because even in our Committee Report it mentions that  
13 there is some stuff that's mandated, but some of the  
14 topics covered by my colleagues might not be  
15 mandated. And I'll-- and I observed during the  
16 course of my tenure teaching that sometimes the city  
17 guidance and the state guidance are sometimes at  
18 conflict, and I'll give you one example. I was  
19 teaching economics one year and I wanted to show a  
20 clip from a documentary to my students what a home  
21 foreclosure process looks like. It's not pretty, and  
22 the person being evicted obviously used some language  
23 that was pretty strong, but because the documentary  
24 was rated "R" I was not showing the whole thing, just  
25 the clip of the foreclosure, I was told we can't show



1 that in public schools, but if you go on the New York  
2 State DOE website and look at their recommended or  
3 their suggested curriculum supplements, they actually  
4 recommend rated "R" films or documentaries to show  
5 certain course-- to supplement certain coursework.  
6 So on one hand the City is saying you can't show  
7 these things, but the State of New York is saying you  
8 should. And so my question is, do educators feel  
9 empowered and comfortable, and do we have clear,  
10 concise rules about what we can actually discuss and  
11 show in a classroom without a fear of being  
12 disciplined, without a fear of some sort of  
13 retribution, or is the workplace environment secure  
14 enough for educators to feel that these are topics  
15 that can be covered without getting in trouble? I  
16 mean, that's just a question I have as a former  
17 educator.

18  
19 LAURA FEIJOO: Certainly the recommended  
20 topics are topics we want educators to teach and  
21 explore, and there's clear professional development  
22 and guidance about that. Some of the pieces you're  
23 talking about are not necessarily rules versus  
24 supervisory judgement. There is a-- certainly a  
25 supervisory judgment in terms of age appropriate

1 content that needs to happen and an awareness of the  
2 community and the students that we're showing it to.  
3 So there's a little bit of that part of it, whether  
4 the segment or the entire thing is recommended or  
5 not, we have recommendations at a lot of places where  
6 we have both teacher judgement, right, and  
7 supervisory judgement to be able to make the right  
8 call for the right appropriate content for a group of  
9 students. So, there is a piece of that. I think we  
10 feel very comfortable to say that anything in the  
11 curriculum, anything in terms that we're training  
12 teachers on or in terms of related to the content is  
13 something that should be taught and we encourage, and  
14 when things come up that may be sensitive areas,  
15 individual student things that are personal and  
16 sensitive, we try to create school cultures that  
17 provide opportunities for the trusted adults that  
18 both Deputy Chancellor Rose and Lindsey Harr talked  
19 about, what's appropriate for a classroom discussion,  
20 and then opportunities for students to have that  
21 trusted adult when maybe the content goes in places  
22 that's more personal.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Right. Just  
25 what I found, and I'll close by saying this, is that

1  
2 one school, as you mentioned supervisory judgement,  
3 one supervisor might say it's okay, but another  
4 school, they might feel it's not okay. And you know,  
5 I was teaching 12<sup>th</sup> graders, and they've seen in  
6 their science class videos of childbirth, and we're  
7 telling them that homeowners losing their house and  
8 they might use a strong word, and that's in  
9 appropriate. That's human emotion. That's reality.  
10 We can't sugarcoat what happens during a foreclosure,  
11 right?

12 LAURA FEIJOO: Yeah.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: I just feel that  
14 with this taskforce concept to examine whether or not  
15 our city rules and regulations and guidance, if  
16 there's any conflict amongst themselves or with the  
17 state, because we need to make sure that people feel  
18 comfortable, students, families, educators, we're all  
19 on the same page about covering these important  
20 topics and not feeling that, you know, someone's  
21 breaking any rules. So, I just-- I think it's an  
22 important point to raise during this hearing.

23 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: And I thank you  
24 for raising it. I think Lindsey spoke a little bit  
25 before about the idea around a focus groups and

1  
2 having guidance counselors and teachers and  
3 principals talk about it so that there is some common  
4 conversations about appropriate and then areas that  
5 should be covered and considered.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Great. Thank  
7 you. Thanks Chair.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Excellent question,  
9 and I have an experience to relate on that subject as  
10 well because when I was teaching I was sent for a  
11 training at Teacher's College on how to teach a new  
12 perspective on Columbus, and we're getting to the  
13 area of cultural responsive education here as well,  
14 and when I taught the lesson, what it was is that it  
15 took a page from the diary of Christopher Columbus.  
16 It was abridged and it was translated, and in it it  
17 said the Native Americans were barbarians and were  
18 without religion, etcetera, so forth and so on  
19 according to Columbus, and then I asked the students  
20 having given them prior knowledge as to what did they  
21 think about Columbus' entry into the journal. Well,  
22 a parent did come up and a parent complained and said  
23 that I was teaching Columbus all wrong, but  
24 fortunately I had my lesson plan and I had a  
25 principal who backed me up on it, and I was able to

1  
2 get away with it. But that-- it is a serious point  
3 that you bring up especially in regard to sex  
4 education as well because I think that we as  
5 educators find ourselves in that position quite  
6 often. But let me go to some questions on GNT, and  
7 then I know I wanted to just get a general feel from  
8 you, although you don't comment too much on the  
9 resolution, but I know that you have been doing some  
10 good things around culturally responsive education as  
11 well. SO, with the GNT, can you provide a  
12 demographic breakdown of students by race and  
13 ethnicity of those who are enrolled in GNT programs,  
14 and how do those numbers compare with prior years?

15 ROBERT SANFT: Sure, we can definitely  
16 provide that to you. The numbers have been  
17 relatively flat over the last several years. Right  
18 now the compositions of the program is for the  
19 2016/2017 school year 38 percent Asian, eight percent  
20 black, 10 percent Hispanic, 37 percent White, and  
21 seven percent other.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. I think in  
23 Deputy Chancellor-- oh, no, I think it was in your  
24 testimony you said that we're now using multiple  
25 measures in various districts in the City. I am a

1  
2 proponent of multiple measures in many cases, even  
3 for entrance into specialized high schools, but I'm  
4 not going to get into that right now. We had a 10-  
5 hour and 45-minute hearing on that a couple of years  
6 ago. But I'm just curious to know what the thinking  
7 is around using multiple measure citywide and not  
8 just in those districts that you mentioned.

9           ROBERT SANFT: I think where we are doing  
10 it in the districts that previously didn't have GNT  
11 programs, districts seven, 12, 16, and 23. We have  
12 just started piloting programs in those district at  
13 the third grade using a greater number of measures  
14 that are available for our second graders, including  
15 two years' worth of report cards, attendance,  
16 indicators of gifted behaviors, descriptors of  
17 exceptional characteristics from the teachers. We  
18 want to see and evaluate how these programs do and  
19 then obviously we're interested in having  
20 conversations and looking at whether or not it would  
21 be something we'd like to do in other districts as  
22 well.

23           CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Sure. So, you know,  
24 I would really encourage you to move in that  
25 direction. I was not quite trained in but was aware

1  
2 of Renzulli's methods of determining giftedness as  
3 well, and a big piece of that was creativity which I  
4 don't think that Standardized Tests get to. So I  
5 think that teacher evaluation, teacher input, can  
6 also lend some idea of the creativeness of those  
7 gifted students. As a matter of fact, I think that  
8 giftedness piece is really-- I mean, that  
9 creativeness piece really determines the giftedness  
10 of the students. So, really would encourage you to  
11 look at that pilot and get back to us on those  
12 results.

13 ROBERT SANFT: Sure.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And then I wanted to  
15 ask about how many students took the GNT test this  
16 spring?

17 ROBERT SANFT: This spring, 34,902  
18 students took the GNT test across grades Pre-k  
19 through Two.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And do we have the  
21 numbers on those yet about how many are going to go  
22 into GNT programs?

23 ROBERT SANFT: We don't. The application  
24 process just kicked off, actually.

25

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Oh, okay. So, then  
3 it's-- oh, due on the 24<sup>th</sup>, am I right? Okay, I see  
4 it on here, okay. Alright, thank you. And I know  
5 Council Member Chin has some questions on GNT.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you, Chair.  
7 You know, oftentimes for immigrant families they hear  
8 about the gifted and talented program from, you know,  
9 friends and word of mouth and they want to find out  
10 more information. So, even just getting I guess a  
11 postcard or getting a letter in the backpack or even  
12 at the Pre-k information session might not be  
13 sufficient to really help them understand the  
14 process. So, you think we should take a look as to  
15 see what else we can do, sort of have people  
16 understand, you know, what is this whole GNT program.  
17 So, the question relating to that is that do you have  
18 statistics in terms of-- because you said that in  
19 your testimony that the number of pre-k students that  
20 took the test was increased by 14.5 percent. Do you  
21 have the data in terms of how many of those that took  
22 the test are ELL students?

23 ROBERT SANFT: We don't know that at the  
24 time of the test, actually. We don't know about that  
25 information until they're enrolled in our schools and



1  
2 there has been assessment done at the school to  
3 determine whether or not they are English language  
4 learners. So, what we do have available is  
5 information about other languages that they might  
6 have signed up for with our system. So, the  
7 application itself, the request for testing process  
8 itself is actually translated into the nine  
9 languages. So if a family actually requested to test  
10 in another language, that is information we have, but  
11 we don't have information about whether or not the  
12 students are in fact English language learners at the  
13 time of signing up and testing. We don't know until  
14 the group is enrolled in the following year.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: But you do have--  
16 okay, so can you take a look to see, I mean, like how  
17 many family that speaks another language actually  
18 requested--

19 ROBERT SANFT: [interposing] absolutely.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: the test? And  
21 also, so you do perform the test in their native  
22 language that they request it?

23 ROBERT SANFT: We do.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Oh, okay, that--  
25 that's good. And do you have statistics in terms of

1  
2 how many of the students that took the test got  
3 accepted into the TNT programs?

4 ROBERT SANFT: We don't have it for the  
5 upcoming school year. I can tell you that in terms  
6 of the number for prior years, just bear with me for  
7 one moment. We had in the 2016 school year for entry  
8 this past fall 36,000-- a little more than 36,000  
9 tested, and there were 4,392 offers and 2,709 of  
10 those offers were accepted and students enrolled.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: So do you-- so,  
12 2,700 student actually--

13 ROBERT SANFT: Enrolled in a GNT program  
14 across grades in that year.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: So, do you-- in the  
16 4,000 that were accepted, do you have the breakdown  
17 in terms of how many of them requested the test in a  
18 second language?

19 ROBERT SANFT: I don't have it with me,  
20 but we can produce it.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Yeah, I think I  
22 will be interested to know to see that are we  
23 reaching the immigrant families and making sure that  
24 they understand the opportunity that's available to  
25 their students.

1  
2 ROBERT SANFT: Sure, we'd be happy to  
3 provide the information.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Good. Thank you.  
5 Thank you, Chair.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. So, with  
7 the GNT schools, classes, are the teachers in those  
8 GNT classes licensed GNT's? Because I know-- I  
9 believe in the UFT contract that they're supposed to  
10 be three-year assignments. How do you deal with the  
11 staffing of those GNT classes?

12 ROBERT SANFT: So, I would have to get  
13 back to you on specifically about the staffing and  
14 the numbers of GNT classes that are staffed with GNT-  
15 certified teachers. I would imagine that most of the  
16 classes are, but we would have to get back to you  
17 with that.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. And there-- is  
19 there a difference between district GNT classes and  
20 citywide GNT classes?

21 ROBERT SANFT: In terms of the pedagogy?

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, in terms of  
23 even entrance into middle schools.

24 ROBERT SANFT: So--  
25

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] So, if  
3 you have an GNT elementary class at 122 in Astoria in  
4 Queens--

5 ROBERT SANFT: [interposing] So-- I'm  
6 sorry to interrupt.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: That's okay. So they  
8 were guaranteed a seat, and I don't want to go  
9 through the whole guaranteeing of the seat, but what  
10 I've been told is that citywide GNT classes do  
11 guarantee a seat in a GNT middle school, but other  
12 district-wide programs don't necessarily guarantee a  
13 seat.

14 ROBERT SANFT: So, the structure and  
15 grade configuration of the citywide programs, the  
16 five citywide programs, lends itself to continuation  
17 in the middle school because they are either K to  
18 eight or K to 12. Many of our district programs are  
19 in elementary schools that are pre-k to five or K to  
20 five, and then students whether they are in a  
21 citywide or a district program would apply for middle  
22 school in their district because many of the students  
23 attending citywide programs actually seek to leave  
24 for middle school in other areas of their district,  
25 but many of them do continue on in their programs.

1  
2 There are also district programs that are in those  
3 configurations, K to eight where the students can  
4 continue in the school, but it's not absolutely the  
5 same configuration that exists in the citywide  
6 programs.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Is there different  
8 criteria for admission into the citywide and the  
9 district GNT programs?

10 ROBERT SANFT: So, citywide programs are  
11 specifically that, they are open citywide. They  
12 don't prioritize based on the district or borough  
13 that they are in, and students who score 97 or above  
14 on the assessment are eligible to apply for those  
15 programs, whereas district programs present a  
16 priority for students who are residents or attending  
17 school in those districts and you need a score of 90  
18 or above to qualify for those programs.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Has the DOE ever  
20 thought of a model or going back to a model that I  
21 was familiar with when I was teaching which was  
22 having a GNT class on every grade in each school?  
23 Because one of the issues that I'm facing in District  
24 30, particularly in Jackson Heights, but I think it's  
25 citywide as well, is that there's a brain drain that

1  
2 occurs. So parents who are aware of the gifted and  
3 talented program, they know to apply. Their kids are  
4 pulled from the local elementary school to go to a  
5 school, district school, and then the lower  
6 performing kids are in the regular, you know, locally  
7 zoned school, and it creates a brain drain. I'm  
8 wondering if there was ever an opportunity that we  
9 could to back to having gifted on every grade in  
10 every school.

11 ROBERT SANFT: So, it is not something  
12 that we have been contemplating, but I'm happy to  
13 take it back and have a conversation about it, and we  
14 can engage you about it further.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Because if we're  
16 moving in those other district to now identify gifted  
17 students where we hadn't done that in the past and  
18 we're going to multiple measures probably in every  
19 school we would have students who would qualify for  
20 that. I just think that's a way to address the  
21 issue. Alright, let me go to culturally responsive  
22 education. Deputy Chancellor, what is the DOE doing  
23 to implement a culturally responsive curricula in the  
24 city schools?

25

1  
2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: So, if I could  
3 just interrupt, Chair Dromm. We'd like to invite Anna  
4 Commitante to join us for this portion of the  
5 questioning and Kenyatte Reid.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And may I swear both  
7 of you in, please? Would you raise your right hand?  
8 DO you solemnly swear or affirm to tell the truth,  
9 the whole truth and nothing but the truth and to  
10 answer Council Member questions honestly?

11 ANNA COMMITANTE: Yes.

12 KENYATTE REID: Yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay.

14 ANNA COMMITANTE: Good afternoon. We  
15 have been involved in addressing issues around  
16 culturally--

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] And Ms.  
18 Commitante, just identify yourself.

19 ANNA COMMITANTE: Oh, sorry. I'm so  
20 sorry. Anna Commitante. I am currently the Senior  
21 Executive Director of Curriculum Instruction and  
22 Professional Learning in the Division of Teaching and  
23 Learning.

24 KENYATTE REID: Good afternoon. I'm  
25 Kenyatte Reid, senior Director of School Culture and

1  
2 Climate in the Office of Safety and Youth  
3 Development.

4 ANNA COMMITANTE: Culturally responsive  
5 pedagogy is a top priority for the Chancellor and for  
6 this Administration. I think we've done significant  
7 work in this regard, particularly in the area of  
8 social studies, and if I'm speaking about the recent  
9 curriculum that we've provided for schools, and we're  
10 moving into doing more of that work in the other  
11 content area. We'd like to thank the Speaker and  
12 City Council for their leadership in moving the issue  
13 of culturally responsive pedagogy forward, and we  
14 also like to thank the Council for the LGBT Community  
15 Liaison and Gender Equity Coordinator who are  
16 currently working with us, and we are looking forward  
17 to doing more work around culturally responsive  
18 pedagogy.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. You know,  
20 at a press conference prior to this hearing today, I  
21 spoke about the experience that I described earlier  
22 about the student with the mehndi on their hand and  
23 how important it is really for teachers to have  
24 empathy, not sympathy, for our different ethnic and  
25 cultural groups within the Department of Education,



1  
2 and I'm wondering how you're dealing with the issue  
3 of training of teachers around these issues, because  
4 you know, I did not know what Eid was until I went  
5 out and did the research on my own and-- nor Diwali  
6 or other holidays. And well, we could explain what  
7 we couldn't explain. Can you give us an idea of what  
8 you're doing around this area?

9 ANNA COMMITANTE: Well, you mentioned the  
10 holidays that actually my team developed the cultural  
11 guides for and we made sure that those were available  
12 to all of our schools last year. To continue in  
13 terms of training that we provide for teachers, this  
14 past summer we partnered with New York City Men Teach  
15 to actually provide sessions on culturally relevant  
16 pedagogy to our new teachers, and we will do that  
17 again this year. Generally every year there are  
18 about 6,000 new teachers that become members of the  
19 New York City teaching force, and we started that  
20 work last summer.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, I've-- Yes, go  
22 ahead, Mr. Reid.

23 ANNA COMMITANTE: There's more, also.

24 KENYATTE REID: In addition, we offer  
25 training for confronting religious bias for all

1 teachers. We have a partnership with NYU called  
2 TACD, Technical Assistance Committee on  
3 Disproportionality, in which at least one school in  
4 every district is identified and given specific  
5 support and training on implicit bias. We also have  
6 an office-expanded success initiative which was  
7 started in 2011 which does specific training on  
8 building and fostering culturally responsive  
9 classrooms in schools communities and Unpacking Our  
10 Implicit Racial Biases. Along with that we have a  
11 series that began this year called Unpacking Racism  
12 which was done for school social workers and guidance  
13 counselors, and part of our restorative justice  
14 initiative which we teach social/emotional learning.  
15 This year we added a new unit on identity and  
16 oppression which is taught to all students.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And this is exactly  
19 what I was getting at is the idea of implicit racism  
20 and other similarities, similar things that happened  
21 in the schools and sensitizing teachers to these  
22 issues who may not have had those experiences  
23 themselves in their own educational career. I went  
24 into Bard High School about-- not even a year ago,  
25 less than a year ago, and I saw teachers teaching a

1  
2 fascinating lesson on the new Jim Crow and the issue  
3 of mass incarceration, and that really engaged those  
4 students. I have to tell you, even as a fourth grade  
5 teacher whenever I would teach about Martin Luther  
6 King, the kids were fascinated on that stuff, and  
7 that really just helped to engage them. And I think  
8 the more we continue to move in this direction, make  
9 education relevant to the lives of the students that  
10 we are teaching, the better, the more successful we  
11 will be. So I'm glad to hear that we're moving on  
12 that. And I know personally of a lot of the work  
13 that Jared Fox has done as well. Deputy Chancellor,  
14 maybe you want to show our safe-- yes, our safe tag,  
15 which is not a huge thing, but it's a very visible  
16 sign when teachers hang around their neck a tag like  
17 that to send a message to LGBT students that this is  
18 a safe place for them and a safe person that they can  
19 talk to. So, I'm appreciative of that effort as  
20 well.

21 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: I think since  
22 this program-- we began this program about two years  
23 ago-- we've distributed over 20,000 of these to  
24 teachers in our schools to help support LGBTQ  
25 students.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, I've been working  
3 with the Coalition for Educational Justice, CEJ, and  
4 that's who held a press conference outside of Tweed  
5 [sic] before coming in here, and I would just  
6 encourage you again to work closely with those parent  
7 groups and to extract their experiences and their  
8 knowledge in terms of how we move forward with  
9 culture responsive education. Thank you. Okay,  
10 thank you very much. We appreciate you all coming  
11 in, and we will see you soon.

12 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: Thank you.

13 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Alright,  
15 so our next panel will be Jeff Lowell from the  
16 Brooklyn Borough President's Office, Eric L. Adams,  
17 Victoria Reing or Ring [sic] I'm sorry, from the  
18 Office of the Bronx Borough President, Tanya St.  
19 Julien, CEC 16, and Patricia Tudosa from the New York  
20 City Charter School Center. Okay, so I'm going to  
21 put everybody on a three-minute time clock and ask  
22 you to please stick to it. I have to be a little  
23 strict today to get through. We have a lot of people  
24 that want to give testimony, but before we start I do  
25 need to swear you in. So can I ask if you would

1 raise your right hand? Do you solemnly swear or  
2 affirm-- okay, I'm sorry. Before I swear you in, one  
3 more, Ayisha Irfan from Manhattan Borough President  
4 Gale Brewer's Office. Alright, now let me swear you  
5 in. Would you raise your right hand? Do you  
6 solemnly swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole  
7 truth and nothing but the truth and to answer Council  
8 Member questions honestly?  
9

10 UNIDENTIFIED: I do.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Who would like  
12 to start?

13 VICTORIA REING: I'll begin. I'm  
14 Victoria Reign, Director of Policy and Deputy Counsel  
15 for the Office of the Bronx Borough President, and I  
16 am reading this testimony today on behalf of Bronx  
17 Borough President Ruben Diaz, Junior. I testify  
18 today in support of Council Member Cornegy's Intro  
19 1347 which would require the Department of Education  
20 to include materials about the gifted and talented  
21 exam and programs along with universal Pre-K  
22 information. I have recently formed a gifted and  
23 talented taskforce along with my colleague, Brooklyn  
24 Borough President Eric L. Adams. Parents have  
25 informed our taskforce of several disturbing trends.

1  
2 First, parents state that they have not received or  
3 have had to proactively seek and request the  
4 informational materials about the gifted and talented  
5 programs and the exam. Our taskforce has even heard  
6 testimony about teachers not being informed about the  
7 test. This is unacceptable. Parents have  
8 unequivocally expressed to the taskforce that we must  
9 do a better job at disseminating information about  
10 gifted and talented programs because we have a  
11 communication issue in our schools. This bill seeks  
12 to address that crucial issue. We need to increase  
13 the numbers of students taking the test in  
14 socioeconomically disadvantaged areas, and the first  
15 critical step is through better communication about  
16 the programs and testing. We should ensure  
17 appropriate materials are widely disseminated, and in  
18 multiple languages. Gifted and talented students  
19 should be challenged in programs that push them to  
20 excel and learn. Our taskforce has heard again and  
21 again that a rigorous curriculum is required for  
22 success on the Specialized High School Admissions  
23 Test and in high school, and we need to do everything  
24 we can to make sure students get the skills they  
25 need. Gifted and talented education is a key piece

1 of this educational puzzle because it provides  
2 academic rigor for young children that paves the way  
3 for later success. For instance, anecdotal testimony  
4 to our taskforce from many alumni of the specialized  
5 high schools in New York City points to their and  
6 their peers' gifted educational experiences in New  
7 York City public school prior to high school as  
8 pivotal in allowing them to excel later in life. The  
9 later achievements of New York City Gifted and  
10 Talented program alumni include success on the SHSAT,  
11 in high school, at the country's best colleges, which  
12 accept students from New York City's Specialized High  
13 Schools, and in their careers. We need to correct  
14 this problem of poor communication about gifted and  
15 talented programs and testing immediately, and we  
16 need to make best efforts to inform parents about the  
17 test so that their children can have a chance at a  
18 gifted and talented education and the later successes  
19 that flow from a challenging early education.  
20 Additionally, our taskforce is reviewing options for  
21 casting a wider net with gifted and talented testing  
22 based on research and anecdotal testimony. Making  
23 information about the test more widely available is a  
24 sensible incremental step. The low numbers for Black  
25

1  
2 and Latino students in gifted programs, less than 30  
3 percent of the G&T population, although they comprise  
4 70 percent of New York City students, may be  
5 explained in part due to the communication issue that  
6 parents have articulated to the taskforce. My final  
7 sentence: No parent should be deprived of information  
8 about gifted and talented programs. In order to  
9 ensure students from all neighborhoods get access to  
10 gifted and talented education, we must make these  
11 programs well known. Council Member Cornegy's  
12 legislation is a great first step towards making this  
13 happen, and I urge the City Council to pass this  
14 piece of important legislation. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Next, please.

16 JEFF LOWELL: Thank you. Good afternoon,  
17 Chair Dromm.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Just push the button  
19 so we can hear you. Yep.

20 JEFF LOWELL: Good afternoon, Chair Dromm  
21 and members of the Committee. My name is Jeff  
22 Lowell. I'm the Deputy Policy Director of Brooklyn  
23 Borough President Eric Adams, and I'm reading  
24 testimony on his behalf. I want to thank you for  
25 allowing us testify today, particularly to Council



1  
2 Member Cornegy for introducing this important piece  
3 of legislation concerning equality of access to the  
4 New York City DOE's gifted and talented programs.  
5 Intro Number 1347 is an important step toward having  
6 a gifted and talented program that is truly  
7 equitable, but it is only one step of many that will  
8 be needed to reach that goal. Along with Bronx  
9 Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr., we have formed a  
10 taskforce comprising parent leaders who will explore  
11 ways to improve access and equity in the City's GNT  
12 programs. At two public hearings, we heard from  
13 parents and experts about their personal experiences  
14 navigating the current system. Many of the parents  
15 stated that they learned about the GNT programs and  
16 the testing by chance or through sources other than  
17 the DOE. The legislation before you today will help  
18 address that very concern. Gifted and talented  
19 programs should not be treated like a government  
20 secret. All parents should be made aware of their  
21 existence and all parents should be informed on  
22 multiple occasions through multiple methods about  
23 testing dates and procedures. By the time a student  
24 enters the DOE system, their parent or guardian  
25 should have been actively informed about these

1  
2 programs and had an opportunity to have any questions  
3 addressed. The City's gifted and talented programs  
4 are often the gateway to New York City's specialized  
5 high schools, which, in turn, are gateways to Ivy  
6 League colleges for New York City students. We  
7 cannot allow lack of awareness to be the reason why a  
8 student is not tested and is ultimately left behind  
9 on the pathway to the Ivy League. Beyond the  
10 critical need for sharing information with all  
11 families, the DOE should explore other ways to make  
12 this process easier for families to navigate, such as  
13 opt-out testing, in which students are scheduled to  
14 be tested unless their parent or guardian  
15 specifically opts out of the process. This will  
16 ensure that the only students who are not tested are  
17 students whose family knows they are not being  
18 tested. For too long, the major determining factors  
19 in acceptance to GNT programs, as well as the City's  
20 test-in specialized high schools, have been the  
21 family's ability to provide extra resources to their  
22 child in the form of test preparation, and/or the  
23 school the student attends. In essence, this means  
24 that affluence is the real test for gifted and  
25 talented programs, not the innate abilities of the

1 child. In addition, many programs don't begin until  
2 the third grade, meaning that students who lack  
3 resources are already behind their peers. Earlier  
4 testing, before a gap in educational outcomes can be  
5 a determining factor and equity in access to  
6 preparatory classes, can help mitigate these factors.  
7 Every year, New York City goes through the same  
8 disturbing exercise: the results of the specialized  
9 high school exam are posted and we look on in shock  
10 that minority students are once again  
11 underrepresented in the schools' freshman classes.  
12 In 2015, Black and Latino students made up 23.1  
13 percent and 23 percent of the test takers  
14 respectively, while they received only 4.9 and 6.8  
15 percent of the offers. Of the 5,104 offers, only 595  
16 went to Black and Latino students. In 2016, these  
17 numbers barely moved, with-- I'm just about done--  
18 with Black and Latino students comprising 21.9 and  
19 22.5 of test takers while receiving 4.1 and 6.3  
20 percent of the offers, a grand total of 530 out of  
21 5,106 offers. The numbers were similar in 2017 with  
22 21 percent and 23.7 percent of test takers being  
23 black and Latino and receiving 3.8 and 6.5 percent of  
24 the offers, resulting in just 524 of the offers. The  
25

1 fact that this happens every year suggests that our  
2 current approach to rectifying this injustice is not  
3 working. We need a new approach, but we also need  
4 the right approach. We cannot continue to do the  
5 same thing every year and expect different results.  
6 We cannot leave anything on the table. If we truly  
7 want a gifted and talented system that is available  
8 to all, we need to look at access to the gifted  
9 programs, the quality of the programs themselves, the  
10 timing of the tests, how these programs feed into the  
11 specialized high schools, and why the very access to  
12 these programs has for far too long been based on  
13 things that have absolutely nothing to do with  
14 whether a child is gifted and talented. There is a  
15 comprehensive solution to this problem, and passing  
16 this legislation is a step toward that solution.

17 Thank you.

18  
19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next,  
20 please.

21 PATRICIA TUDOSA: Hi, my name is Patricia  
22 Tudosa. Good afternoon. I'm the Program Manager of  
23 Policy and Advocacy at the New York City Charter  
24 School Center. Thank you so much for the opportunity  
25 to give this-- to submit this testimony.

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CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Is your mic on?

PATRICIA TUDOSA: I'm sorry, is it on?

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, just pull it a little closer. It's a little hard for me to hear.

PATRICIA TUDOSA: Sure.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, there you go.

PATRICIA TUDOSA: We respectfully submit this testimony in support of the Introduction of 1347, the Local Law requiring that the DOE distribute gifted and talented program materials as part of the dissemination of universal pre-k materials. The Charter Center thanks the New York City Council Committee on Education, Danny Dromm, for providing this opportunity as well as Council Member Cornegy for his sponsorship of the legislation and his push to create more gifted and talented seats in underserved neighborhoods, and the Speaker of the New York City Council, Melissa Mark-Viverito, for prioritizing this issue in her State of the City Address. New York City needs to create more high-quality public school seats. Some proven methods to achieve this goal include charters, magnets and gifted and talented programs, but unlike magnets and GNT programs, only charter schools are prohibited

1 from creating academic screens as a condition of  
2 enrollment. In middle and high school, one in three  
3 seats offered by the DOE have a selective admissions  
4 process and most elementary schools admit students  
5 from a neighborhood enrollment zone which serve a  
6 similar function, perpetuating the same dramatic  
7 inequalities of access as the housing market itself.  
8 To see the private side of public education just try  
9 changing the lines in an affluent school zone and  
10 listen to the parents describe how much they spent to  
11 reside there. Charter schools have thrived in  
12 neighborhoods like Central Brooklyn, Harlem and the  
13 South Bronx precisely because of the dearth of high-  
14 quality public education options. In Harlem, CSD  
15 Five, for example, charter school students'  
16 enrollment as a proportion of total public school  
17 enrollment has increased nearly 30 percentage points  
18 between 2008 and 2016. It's hardly surprising that  
19 families continue to seek seats in charter schools.  
20 In 2016, charter school students in Harlem, CSD Four  
21 and Five significantly outperformed their district  
22 peers in ELA and math assessments by 17.8 and 34.5  
23 percentage points respectively. Though the expansion  
24 of gifted and talented programs into lower income  
25

1 communities has the potential downside of creating  
2 more screens and separating potentially high-  
3 achieving students from their classmates, we do not  
4 believe that this is reason enough to deny families  
5 throughout New York City the same choice that middle  
6 class and wealthy parents have taken for granted for  
7 decades. We are confident that the taskforce created  
8 by Bronx Borough President Diaz and Brooklyn Borough  
9 President Adams can identify creative solutions and  
10 we encourage its members to look to some of the  
11 innovative models used by some of our charter  
12 schools. Brooklyn Prospect Charter School, for  
13 example, has created an inclusive Honors Program that  
14 keeps students at different achievement levels--  
15 almost done-- in the same class to ensure diversity  
16 of thought within the classroom. Therefore, we stand  
17 fully in support of any and all such initiatives, and  
18 we applaud the Council for taking this initiative.  
19 And briefly, I would also like to take the  
20 opportunity to comment on the other initiative that  
21 is in front of the Council today on convening the  
22 taskforce to assess the cultural relevance of state  
23 learning centers across subject areas. This is  
24 another area in which charter schools by design have  
25

1 shown great programmatic and curricular flexibility.  
2 We have a few schools that we can give examples of,  
3 but we are heartened to see these efforts also take  
4 off. So once again I'd like to thank Councilman  
5 Dromm for the opportunity to testify and Council  
6 Members Cornegy and Palma for their initiatives as  
7 well as Speaker Mark-Viverito for her leadership.  
8 Thank you.

10 TANYA ST. JULIEN: Good afternoon. Thank  
11 you Council Chairperson Dromm for the opportunity.  
12 My name is Tanya St. Julien. I represent Community  
13 Education District 16. We represent the voices of  
14 students and families in the Bedford-Stuyvesant  
15 community. From Shirley Chisolm, the first black  
16 Congresswoman to Chris Rock and Sean Carter, AKA Jay-  
17 Z, our district has a rich legacy of leadership and  
18 achievement. And yet, in the past 10 years as  
19 Bedford-Stuyvesant has experienced a revitalization  
20 in business, art and culture, enrollment in our  
21 public schools has decreased as families seek better  
22 options outside of the district. This divestment  
23 must end. The Department of Education must improve  
24 the quality of instruction and program offerings in  
25 Bedford-Stuyvesant so that parents have better



1 options within our flourishing district. In the past  
2 two years, the CEC has worked with Councilman Cornegy  
3 and the Department of Education under Chancellor  
4 Carmen Farina's leadership to add gifted and talented  
5 programs in Bedford-Stuyvesant. This past fall 2016,  
6 the Department opened a third grade gifted and  
7 talented program at PS26, and in September 2017 our  
8 district looks forward to having a sixth grade gifted  
9 and talented class in the same building at Madiba  
10 Prep. We look forward to the Department of Education  
11 providing continued professional development and  
12 resources to ensure that these programs are high-  
13 quality. CEC 16 also continues to support  
14 Superintendent Ryisha Aman Harrison [sp?] in her  
15 efforts to provide more high-quality community  
16 programs throughout the district. Finally, today, we  
17 are here to support the amendment to require gifted  
18 and talented program and exam materials to be  
19 distributed with all universal pre-k materials and  
20 information. We believe that this amendment will  
21 allow all families the opportunity to participate in  
22 a continuum of gifted and talented options from  
23 kindergarten through middle school within District  
24 16.  
25

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.  
3 Next, please?

4 AYISHA IRFAN: Hi, good afternoon. My  
5 name is Ayisha Irfan. I'm with the Manhattan Borough  
6 President. Thank you so much for the opportunity to  
7 testify. I will focus my comments on one of the  
8 bills being considered today, Intro 1028, which would  
9 create a sexual education taskforce, bringing  
10 together New York City public school staff, the staff  
11 from the DOHMH and sexual health education experts to  
12 review the current sexual health education curriculum  
13 and its implementation in New York City public  
14 schools, and to make recommendations for improvement.  
15 As a city that has the responsibility of educating  
16 over one million students we also have a  
17 responsibility to build and implement curricula that  
18 is culturally responsive, and represents our  
19 students' social, cultural and sexual identities.  
20 New York City public school students are required to  
21 take a health class where students learn about  
22 healthy relationships, intimate partner violence,  
23 consent, and how to protect themselves from STDs and  
24 unwanted pregnancies. It is of utmost importance  
25 that we are providing that same education and

1 affirmation to our LGBTQ students, and that the sex  
2 ed. curriculum provides positive examples of LGBTQ  
3 relationships. We know currently the sex ed.  
4 curriculum in New York City public schools largely  
5 leaves out our LGBTQ students. A recent survey of  
6 New York City public school students by youth at the  
7 New York Civil Liberties Union found that just 36  
8 percent of students had learned about LGBTQ  
9 relationships and issues in their sexual ed. classes,  
10 and half of students surveyed said their primary  
11 source of information about sex was their friends.  
12 According to a 2014 report by the Urban Institute on  
13 LGBTQ teen relationships, 42.8 percent of these youth  
14 reported dating violence in their relationships.  
15 Further, 23.2 percent of respondents reported sexual  
16 victimization in their relationships. Even more  
17 alarming, transgender youth reported the highest  
18 rates of dating violence, with 88.9 percent reporting  
19 physical dating violence. This is unacceptable. Our  
20 students must have access to inclusive and  
21 comprehensive sex ed. It's a matter of both their  
22 physical and emotional safety. I fully support Intro  
23 1028, and look forward to its implementation. Thank  
24 you for the opportunity to testify.  
25

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much  
3 as well, and I'm just curious to know if any of your  
4 respective members or organizations have any thoughts  
5 or ideas on multiple measures for admission into  
6 gifted and talented programs?

7 JEFF LOWELL: I mean, I would just say  
8 that we're open to whatever will increase equity and  
9 access to the programs, right? There's nothing that  
10 we're holding sacred as the one way to do it. We  
11 would like to-- and that's part of the reason behind  
12 the taskforce is to see what are our options and what  
13 would work best. No specifics on multiple measures,  
14 just that we're open to them.

15 TANYA ST. JULIEN: District 16 was one of  
16 the districts that the Department of Education worked  
17 with to open a third grade gifted and talented class  
18 this year. We did use multiple measure to create the  
19 third grade class, and thus far it's working  
20 wonderfully. We are seeing students who otherwise  
21 would not necessarily have been in that class exceed  
22 academic expectations.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And you were the  
24 person who mentioned Jay-Z and Chris Rock. They may  
25

1  
2 not have been so good in school, I don't know, but I  
3 know they're very creative people.

4 TANYA ST. JULIEN: And they're very  
5 successful.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And I think using  
7 creativity as a measure in gifted and talented  
8 program is vitally important to determining who gets  
9 into those programs. So, I can't encourage that  
10 enough, and I also think that having a gifted and  
11 talented class on every grade in every school is  
12 another way that we should go and look at that very  
13 carefully. So, I would urge those of you who are on  
14 the taskforce and the panels for your respective  
15 elected officials or the CEC or even our Charter  
16 School Centers as well to look at that as an  
17 opportunity. And one thing I will say, you know, I  
18 do think that gifted and talented students do require  
19 a little bit different type of education because they  
20 are so advanced in many cases that they become bored  
21 if they're not challenged, and so I think that is one  
22 of the reasons why I continue to believe in GNT  
23 programs, but I think we need to have different ways  
24 of evaluating who gets into those programs. So, I

1  
2 thank you all for coming in and for sharing your  
3 testimony. Thank you very much.

4 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you.

5 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, so now we're  
7 going to have a panel on sex education: Danielle  
8 Castaldi-Micca, from the National Institute for  
9 Reproductive Health, Pat Maloney from the Inwood  
10 House Children's Village, Amy Schwartz from WCC  
11 SEANYC, Francisco Ramirez from Planned Parenthood of  
12 New York City, and Aviva Zadoff, National Council on  
13 Jewish Women. Okay, can I ask you all to raise your  
14 right hand? Do you solemnly swear or affirm to tell  
15 the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth  
16 and to answer Council Member questions honestly?

17 UNIDENTIFIED: I do.

18 UNIDENTIFIED: I do.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Alrighty, who would  
20 like to start? Over here?

21 DANIELLE CASTALDI-MICCA: Hi.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Hey.

23 DANIELLE CASTALDI-MICCA: My name is  
24 Danielle Castaldi-Micca. I am the Director of  
25 Political and Government Affairs at the National

1  
2 Institute for Reproductive Health. Thank you,  
3 Council Member Dromm for chairing this committee  
4 hearing and for sticking it out with us. We always  
5 appreciate that, and I'd also like to thank the  
6 Speaker who has really led the charge on  
7 comprehensive sex education, in particular in her  
8 most recent State of the City Address. The National  
9 Institute for Reproductive Health builds power at the  
10 state and local level to change public policy,  
11 galvanize public support and normalize decisions  
12 around abortion and contraception, but we don't just  
13 push back against restrictions on abortion and  
14 contraception. We fight for a society in which  
15 everyone has the freedom and ability to control their  
16 reproductive and sexual lives, and vital to that  
17 mission is making sure that young people are equipped  
18 with the education and tools to make the decisions  
19 that are best for their health, safety and happiness.  
20 To that end, we strongly support Intro 1028A and  
21 Resolution 1415 as important steps towards finally  
22 making fully-resourced K through 12 comprehensive  
23 sexuality education a reality in New York City  
24 schools. NIRH is also the co-chair of the Sexuality  
25 Education Alliance of New York City, SEANYC, a broad

1 coalition that advocates for comprehensive K through  
2 12 sex education that meets the National Sexuality  
3 Education Standards for all New York City youth.

4 SEANYC aims to ensure that New York City is creating  
5 safe learning environments where students can access  
6 the information and skills that they need to make  
7 healthy decisions and fulfill meaningful and

8 productive lives. Since 2011, DOE has required both  
9 middle and high schools to incorporate sex ed. into  
10 the two semesters of state-mandated health. We

11 believe that this requirement doesn't go nearly far  
12 enough and that sexuality education has to be

13 expanded to all grades. We also recommend that DOE  
14 Chancellor Carmen Farina pass a Chancellor's

15 Regulation requiring comprehensive age-appropriate

16 sex ed. that reflects the national standards for all  
17 students K through 12. We often liken it to not being  
18 able to teach students algebra in high school if you  
19 haven't taught them how to count in kindergarten.

20 While we have broader ambitions for what sex ed. in

21 New York City should look like, we have time and time

22 again heard from students and educators and parents

23 that schools across the City simply aren't meeting

24 the modest sexuality education requirements that DOE  
25



1  
2 currently has in place. A poll conducted by the  
3 SEANYC Youth Advisory Council this past summer found  
4 that only 64.5 percent of the students surveyed had  
5 received sex education. That deficiency creates a  
6 serious risk for student safety and healthy.  
7 Troublingly, 59 percent of students reported that  
8 they had never learned about consent in school or  
9 elsewhere. The DOE recently released the new health  
10 education data in response to Local Laws 14 and 15  
11 which demonstrated that many schools are out of  
12 compliance with the state health education  
13 requirements and our City's sexuality education  
14 standards. Forty-three percent of eighth graders  
15 citywide have not received health education before  
16 leaving middle school. The vast majority of schools  
17 do not have licensed health educators on-site in  
18 middle school and high schools. A staggering over  
19 15,000 unique instructors teach some piece of health  
20 education in our schools at all grade levels, but  
21 only 153 of them are licensed health educators, which  
22 I know we talked about at that hearing as well, and  
23 only 7.6 of them have attended any training on sexual  
24 health education over the last few years. Clearly,  
25 sexuality education is not being appropriately

1  
2 implemented. DOE needs the resources to hire more  
3 licensed health educators, train current teachers and  
4 implement some accountability measures so that the  
5 schools can provide the health education students  
6 deserved and are required by state law. With that in  
7 mind, the sexual health taskforce created by the  
8 proposed legislation will guide the Administration in  
9 rectifying this issue and establish New York as the  
10 leader that we know it can and should be on this  
11 issue. We appreciate that the bill would establish a  
12 taskforce with a diverse field of experts, although  
13 we urge the taskforce to include more than one  
14 students representation-- represented upon that  
15 committee. We also recommend that there be public  
16 response mechanisms put into place for other  
17 students, parents and teachers who aren't on the  
18 taskforce itself to weigh in on the process and that  
19 the taskforce commit to adhering to the National  
20 Sexuality Education Standards as a guide for its  
21 curriculum review. We're pleased that the bill  
22 commits the taskforce to an expedited timeline for  
23 its work. We hope that the Council and the  
24 Administration prioritize the taskforce and holding  
25 its members accountable and give it appropriate

1  
2 resources to do that work in that short timeframe. In  
3 February the IBO reported that STI cases in New York  
4 City had reached their highest level in 30 years.

5 The DOE and this Administration have a serious  
6 responsibility to keep our young people safe, healthy  
7 and equipped with the tools they need to make the  
8 best decisions for their lives. A comprehensive  
9 sexuality education policy that is sufficiently  
10 funded and includes an achievable timeline for  
11 implementation for K through 12 standards and  
12 accountability measures for enforcement and  
13 evaluation would help ensure that every school has  
14 the ability to provide supportive and inclusive  
15 education for all of its students. As such, the  
16 National Institute for Reproductive Health  
17 enthusiastically supports Intro 1028A and Reso. 1415.

18 Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next  
20 please.

21 PATRICIA MALONEY: I'm Pat Maloney from  
22 Inwood House. I'm a Project Director there, and  
23 we're affiliated with the Children's Village in  
24 Harlem Dowling. All of us have been around since the  
25 1830s and we serve more than 17,000 children and

1 families each year. At Inwood House we have been  
2 providing comprehensive sex education in the schools  
3 for almost 40 years. We started before the advent of  
4 HIV/AIDS. We went through the teen pregnancy  
5 explosion, and we're still there. Today, we're in 10  
6 public schools in four boroughs. The need for this  
7 is as urgent as it has ever been, and therefore we're  
8 very grateful to you, Chairman Dromm, for convening  
9 this hearing. We're also grateful to the speaker and  
10 all the City Council members who have signed on to  
11 Intro 1028A. We are a member of SEANYC, and we  
12 enthusiastically support Intro 1028 and think that it  
13 will at least keep us on the path so that all New  
14 York City public school students have the information  
15 that they need to make healthy decisions. We've  
16 already talked about Intro 952 and the data that came  
17 out of that. Fewer than half of eighth graders  
18 received health before they left middle school. The  
19 fact that there are only 153 licensed health  
20 educators for 1.1 million students is clearly  
21 inadequate, and we've also talked about the 7.6  
22 percent of all health instructors who attended any  
23 kind of training in sexual health over the past two  
24 years. So, this clearly means that students are  
25

1  
2 often not getting sexual health or they are being  
3 taught by unlicensed, untrained educators. The  
4 taskforce that is being proposed through Intro 1028A  
5 will really provide a great opportunity to assess  
6 what's going on, and I'd like to just reinforce some  
7 of the recommendations that we would like to make as  
8 well. We would like to see more than one student on  
9 the taskforce for broader representation. We'd like  
10 to make sure that all of the experts are carefully  
11 vetted and committed to adhering to standards and  
12 inclusivity. There should be many opportunities for  
13 students and parents to weigh in. Just two more  
14 points. Professional development guidelines and  
15 sensitivity training have to be carefully considered  
16 and incorporated, and we would like to make sure that  
17 the progress of the taskforce is supported, monitored  
18 regularly and that the time frame stated is met.  
19 Thank you very much.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, also.  
21 Next please.

22 FRANCISCO RAMIREZ: Good afternoon. I am  
23 Francisco Ramirez, Vice President of Education at  
24 Planned Parenthood of New York City. Thank you to  
25 the Committee, Council Member Dromm, Council Member

1  
2 Cumbo, and the Speaker for your support and the  
3 opportunity to testify today in support of Intro  
4 1028A and Reso. 1415. As one of the nation's most  
5 trusted sexual health education providers, Planned  
6 Parenthood knows what comprehensive sexuality  
7 education requires, and we see firsthand what gaps  
8 remain in New York City schools. While the DOE  
9 requires sex ed. to be taught during a semester in  
10 middle and high school, due to a lack of  
11 accountability, adequate resources and enforcement,  
12 students' experiences vary widely when it comes to  
13 sexual health learning. For sex ed. to be  
14 comprehensive and effective, lessons must be aligned  
15 with the National Sexuality Education Standards and  
16 include a sufficient number of lessons to adequately  
17 cover content. Unfortunately, too many schools  
18 currently fail to do this. Our educators work with  
19 schools across the City and have experienced  
20 administrators limiting their lessons and restricting  
21 what topics students can learn. For example,  
22 recently one Queens middle school prohibited our  
23 educators from teaching reproduction and minor's  
24 rights during workshops on anatomy, STDS and HIV.  
25 When school administrators are unwilling to follow

1 New York City sexuality education guidelines and  
2 there are no measures in place to hold schools  
3 accountable, students are in fact denied critical  
4 health education and their health and wellbeing are  
5 put at risk. Students have also shared firsthand  
6 experience of gaps in their school's sex ed. As we  
7 know, SEANYC polled over 300 middle and high school  
8 students and found that many students are not  
9 receiving the information that they need to make  
10 healthy decisions. In fact, 59 percent of students  
11 said that they did not learn about consent in school  
12 or elsewhere, and only 64.5 percent of students  
13 polled reported receiving any sex ed. in school. The  
14 need for changes to our city's sex education is  
15 urgent. Intro 1028A would address current gaps  
16 through a taskforce that assesses implementation and  
17 provides concrete recommendations for improvement,  
18 and Reso. 1415 calls upon the state to convene a  
19 taskforce to assess state learning standards and  
20 plans for addressing discrimination in current  
21 curriculum. We applaud the Speaker and Council for  
22 advancing these bills and strengthening education for  
23 our city's students. We also recognize that robust  
24 citywide initiative on sexual health education is  
25

1  
2 needed now more than ever. We urge the  
3 Administration to implement a clear K through 12  
4 policy with greater resources dedicated to training  
5 and staff, requirements on what lessons must be  
6 taught and enforcement measures to ensure every  
7 school provides comprehensive programming in  
8 accordance with the National Sexuality Education  
9 Standards. New York City can no longer wait to  
10 implement sex ed. Current gaps have been well-  
11 documented by both DOE and New York City students.  
12 And my last sentence. As we face new federal attacks  
13 on evidence-informed education and sexual and  
14 reproductive health, New York City must be a  
15 progressive leader and stand up for our city's youth.  
16 Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I'm curious. In the  
18 Queens school, was that a high school?

19 FRANCISCO RAMIREZ: Middle school,  
20 seventh grade, and we were not allowed to continue to  
21 eighth grade.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: A middle school. I'd  
23 love to get the name of that later one from one of  
24 my-- just give it to one of my staffers.

25



1  
2 FRANCISCO RAMIREZ: Sure, we can follow  
3 up. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next  
5 please.

6 AMY SCHWARTZ: Good afternoon. I'm Amy  
7 Schwartz. I'm a member of the Public Policy  
8 Committee of the Women's City Club of New York. WCC  
9 is a proud and active member of SEANYC. I'd like to  
10 thank the Education Committee Chair Daniel Dromm for  
11 convening this hearing, the Speaker of the City  
12 Council and all the City Council members who have  
13 signed onto Intro. 1028A and Resolution 1415. I'm  
14 very grateful for continued support of comprehensive  
15 education. I'm also a parent of a New York City  
16 public high school student, and I'm surviving, and I  
17 can attest from firsthand experience that the need  
18 for comprehensive sexual education in our public  
19 schools is more urgent than ever. Proposed Intro.  
20 1028A is a critical step in achieving that goal.  
21 Entering its second century, WCC is a century-old  
22 organization that shapes public policy through  
23 education, issue analysis, advocacy, and civic  
24 participation. Most recently we created the Sex  
25 Education New York City Public Schools Taskforce amid

1 concern that the 2012 sex education mandate which was  
2 introduced by DOE had not accomplished its intended  
3 goal to provide comprehensive sexuality education to  
4 middle and high school students. As we all know in  
5 particular, DOE requires one semester of health  
6 education in middle school and one semester in high  
7 school, and the Office of School Wellness Programs  
8 calls for a portion of each of these semesters to  
9 cover sexuality education. However, due to a lack of  
10 accountability, inadequate resources and enforcement  
11 students' experiences vary widely when it comes to  
12 sexual education-- sexual learning, rather. We've  
13 heard about the DOE's recently released reports  
14 revealing that many students are not receiving even  
15 the bare minimum of recommended sexual health  
16 education. I won't go into describing it. That's  
17 been stated before. So in the interest of time I'll  
18 move on to say that as a parent I remember that I  
19 shuttered when my teenage daughter confided how  
20 little she learned of sexual health in public middle  
21 school and the inadequate training given to those  
22 responsible for teaching her vital education on  
23 sexual health. I was disappointed when I saw the  
24 reproduced copies of scant information on sexually  
25

1  
2 transmitted diseases and birth control options and  
3 nothing about sexual orientation or emotional  
4 wellbeing. Equally as disturbing, my daughter who is  
5 now a junior in high school who has completed all of  
6 her sex education will complete her public school  
7 education without having been taught by a qualified  
8 professional the lessons for developing healthy  
9 relationships, building self-esteem and positive body  
10 image, and learning about keeping an healthy  
11 lifestyle. However, Intro 1028A offers hope that the  
12 many other New York City public school students could  
13 still receive a more comprehensive sexual health  
14 education. As we know, it recognizes the immediate  
15 need for a thorough assessment of how sexual health  
16 equal is actually being implemented in public schools  
17 citywide. This is desperately needed. We need to  
18 have a baseline and calls for time recommendations.  
19 I will just basically sum it up by saying that we  
20 support, WCC supports this bill. Our concerns, our  
21 recommendations are covered elsewhere. We ask for  
22 more than one student on a taskforce. We'd like to  
23 have also a member of the advocacy community be part  
24 of this as well, and we respect and recommend that  
25 December 1<sup>st</sup> deadline for the taskforce to report its

1  
2 findings. Thank you very much for the opportunity to  
3 testify.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next,  
5 please.

6 AVIVA ZADOFF: Good afternoon. My name  
7 is Aviva Zadoff, and I'm the Chair of the  
8 Reproductive Justice Initiative at the National  
9 Council of Jewish Women New York section. Thank you  
10 to Chairman Daniel Dromm for convening this hearing,  
11 the committee for their continued support of  
12 comprehensive education, Speaker Melissa Mark-  
13 Viverito, Council Member Cumbo, and all of the  
14 Council Members who have signed on to Intro 1028A.  
15 Comprehensive sexuality education policy continues to  
16 be an imperative in the larger fight for reproductive  
17 justice and is now more urgent than ever for New York  
18 City to lead the way on this issue, and that is why  
19 I'm here to speak in support of Intro 1028A. The  
20 National Council of Jewish Women New York is a  
21 grassroots organizations of volunteers and advocates  
22 who turn progressive ideals into action. Inspired by  
23 Jewish values, NCJW of New York strives for social  
24 justice by improving the quality of life for women,  
25 children and families and by safeguarding individual

1 rights and freedoms, and as such, NCJW New York is  
2 committed to seeing comprehensive sex education  
3 enacted in all New York City schools. NCJW New York  
4 is a proud member of SEANYC. The New York City  
5 Department of Education currently requires one  
6 semester of health education in middle school and one  
7 semester in high school with a portion of each of  
8 these semesters devoted to covering sexuality  
9 education. However, due to a lack of accountability,  
10 adequate resource and enforcement students'  
11 experiences vary widely when it comes to sexual  
12 health learning. The finding of SEANYC's poll  
13 mentioned by my colleagues as well as the DOE's own  
14 data released in 2016 reveal the inconsistencies in  
15 the Administration of sexuality education throughout  
16 our school. Bill Intro. 1028A recognizes the  
17 immediate need for a thorough assessment of how  
18 sexual health education is actually being implemented  
19 in public schools citywide and calls for a timely  
20 recommendation to improve that effort through the  
21 establishment of a sexual health education taskforce.  
22 Having a requirement of a student representative on  
23 the taskforce is significant, and to ensure broader  
24 representation and consistency of youth input we  
25

1  
2 could encourage the taskforce to include more than  
3 the one requires student. We would also like for sex  
4 education advocates to be under consideration for  
5 positions on the taskforce and that all experts  
6 chosen for the taskforce be carefully vetted and  
7 committed to adhering to both national standards and  
8 inclusivity. We also recommend that the republic  
9 [sic] response mechanisms put in place for all New  
10 York City students, parents and teachers to provide  
11 feedback throughout the taskforce review and  
12 recommendation process. NCJW New York would like to  
13 voice strong support for the December 1<sup>st</sup> deadline  
14 for this taskforce to report its findings. We  
15 appreciate the urgency that this bill puts on  
16 improving sexuality education and believe that this  
17 deadline ensures that we continue to move forward  
18 towards improving sexuality education in New York  
19 City. Lastly, considering the DOE's report finding  
20 that only 7.6 of all health education instructors  
21 have attended any training on sexual health education  
22 in the last two years, we recognize the importance of  
23 strengthening requirements and opportunities around  
24 sexual health professional development and look  
25 forward to the creation of a taskforce that will

1 prioritize teacher training and resource needs.

2 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

3 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

4 Wow, thank you for being within the bell.

5 AVIVA ZADOFF: Timed it well.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Just want to point  
7 out that we said at least one student would be on the  
8 taskforce, so there may be others as well. That's  
9 number one. Number two, do we have any idea of  
10 what's happening at the federal level with Betsy  
11 Devos and sex education? Does anybody want to chime  
12 in on that? Maybe Planned Parenthood?

13 FRANCISCO RAMIREZ: Well, I mean in  
14 short, I'm not necessarily optimistic, right? To say  
15 the least. I mean, what I can say is that though  
16 sexuality education obviously is in-- within the  
17 realm of education, in fact it encompasses and pulls  
18 on sort of facets and aspects of education that  
19 traditional educators may not consider, right? How  
20 are we inclusive of people of different sexual  
21 orientations, gender identity, for example? And so  
22 if I'm not so optimistic with that might happen at  
23 the federal level on education in general, I am much  
24

1  
2 less hopeful on what might happen around sexuality  
3 education at the federal level.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, good. Now, let  
5 me ask also, if each of you had to say one thing  
6 you'd like to see come out of the taskforce that  
7 would really have an impact, quickly tell me one  
8 thing. Danielle?

9 DANIELLE CASTALDI-MICCA: I would like to  
10 see the taskforce have recommendations for actual  
11 implementation of comprehensive sex ed. across the  
12 grades.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Next?

14 PATRICIA MALONEY: I agree, and I'd like  
15 to see much more accountability and assurance that  
16 it's actually happening.

17 FRANCISCO RAMIREZ: I'd like to see  
18 training and the provision that the people who are  
19 actually doing the education are well-trained and  
20 know what they're doing.

21 AMY SCHWARTZ: I would also like to see  
22 more accountability with a report and evaluation so  
23 that we see what's being done.

24

25



1  
2 AVIVA ZADOFF: I would like to see a  
3 broadening of the subjects in the curriculum that's  
4 recommended by the DOE.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, good. Thank you  
6 very, very much. I appreciate you all for taking  
7 time to come in today. Thank you. Our next panel  
8 will be culturally responsive education: Natasha  
9 Capers from the Coalition for Educational Justice,  
10 Celia Green from CEJ as well and D75 CEC, Cynthia  
11 Williams-- is she here? Oh, my goodness. Cynthia,  
12 it's so good to see you. Natalie McCabe Zwerger, NYU  
13 Metro Center, Roberto Soto-Carrion from Border  
14 Crossers. Very good. Can I ask you all to raise  
15 your right hand so I can swear you in? Do you  
16 solemnly swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole  
17 truth and nothing but the truth and to answer Council  
18 Member questions honestly? I forgot to mention also  
19 we've been joined by Council Member Levine and Levin.  
20 Do you swear to tell the truth? Okay, very good.  
21 Thank you. Natasha, would you like to start?

22 NATASHA CAPERS: Good afternoon. I'm  
23 Natasha Capers, Coordinator for the New York City  
24 Coalition for Educational Justice and the proud  
25 mother of two sons who attend public school in

1  
2 Districts 13 and 23. The parents of CEJ would like  
3 to commend the New York City Council and the Speaker  
4 for taking such an important step to ensure that our  
5 schools are actively working towards being spaces  
6 free of oppression. The formation of a state  
7 taskforce that will work and align the current  
8 standards with best practice on cultural  
9 responsiveness has far reaching positive  
10 implications. Cultural responsive education is an  
11 academically rigorous student-centered education that  
12 cultivates critical thinking skills. It relates  
13 academic history study to contemporary issues,  
14 fosters positive academic racial and cultural  
15 identities and develops the ability for students to  
16 connect cross culturally while developing young  
17 people who are equipped to be agents for social  
18 change. New York City schools are overwhelmingly  
19 black and Latino while in our classrooms most of our  
20 teaching force are white and are white women, and  
21 therefore it is more imperative that we do this work  
22 now. As my child was-- one of my sons was in the  
23 third grade, they started to study poetry. They  
24 studied acrostic poems, the types that go up and down  
25 and then you build a word or a phrase off of the

1 first letter. The teacher chose the word "Africa,"  
2 and one of the A's that was in Africa was for AIDS.  
3 My son was in the third grade. This is his first  
4 introduction to what AIDS or HIV was, but it also  
5 inevitably [sic] linked AIDS to Africa. New York  
6 State Standards are used to guide the design of  
7 curriculum in districts across the state. CEJ has  
8 been researching and fighting for culturally  
9 responsive education in New York City and throughout  
10 that process we have heard time and time again that  
11 one of the most important things that must be done if  
12 we want to see citywide change is to impact the  
13 standards that shape curriculum and expectations at  
14 the state level. Assessing the standards across  
15 subject areas means that culturally responsive  
16 education would become embedded in the fabric of how  
17 one teaches and what is taught. It steers us away  
18 from the heroes and holidays model of cultural  
19 relevance. While we want to see a more diverse mix  
20 of people be uplift and celebrate, we also want  
21 cultural competence to be in the everyday  
22 interactions between students, teachers, staff, and  
23 families. Culturally responsive education is not an  
24 add-on. It is more than an elective or about just  
25

1  
2 adding more posters onto the wall. It shouldn't be  
3 left up to chance if your child will have a teacher  
4 that can or will do the hard work, hard yet important  
5 work of culturally responsiveness. Students  
6 shouldn't have to wait until high school or, even  
7 worse, until college to have an in-depth  
8 understanding of their own race, culture, heritage,  
9 or that of their peers. While there is a lot that  
10 the City can do, the state can do a lot of work as  
11 well, and this is the first of many steps that we  
12 must take. It is crucial that we take this first  
13 step, yet continue to build together across the city  
14 and the state to make a deep lasting impact. Thank  
15 you.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Next, please.

17 CELIA GREEN: Good afternoon. My name is  
18 Celia Green and I'm also a parent leader with the  
19 Coalition for Educational Justice as well as a mom of  
20 four young men on the spectrum of autism, and I  
21 currently am finishing my fourth year on the Citywide  
22 Education Council for District 75. I'm a big  
23 proponent of creating the change we hope to see.  
24 Let's prepare our students for the world. In  
25 preparing our students that has to include a

1  
2 culturally relevant education. When we see ourselves  
3 reflected in academic curriculum we are less likely  
4 to bully others. When we are no longer  
5 disenfranchised, you have the opportunity to thrive.  
6 It creates a motivation and a confidence in our  
7 students, and I also want there to be some discussion  
8 around disability and ability or students being able  
9 to accept children and other students of varying  
10 abilities. My children are lucky enough that two of  
11 my younger children are in inclusion programs with  
12 D75 supports, but every child in New York City is not  
13 necessarily that lucky, and I do believe that if  
14 there is such a thing as culturally relevant  
15 education or culturally responsive education, this  
16 would broaden our children's horizons because our  
17 children, we need to make them ready for the real  
18 world and the real world has all people of different  
19 colors, different races, different ethnicities, and  
20 we need to preach tolerance in this time in this day  
21 and age. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

23 O'CYNTHIA WILLIAMS: Good afternoon. My  
24 name is O'Cynthia Williams, a founding member of the  
25 New York City Coalition for Educational Justice and

1  
2 Co-Director of the Harlem Renaissance Education  
3 Pipeline, Cradle to Career, Collective Impact  
4 Partnership. We're working to improve educational  
5 outcomes for students in Harlem District Five, and  
6 I'm testifying today in support of Resolution 1415.  
7 I want to thank Speaker Mark-Viverito, Council Member  
8 Palma and Levin for sponsoring this much needed  
9 resolution. Calling for the New York State Education  
10 Department to convene a taskforce for us to assess  
11 the cultural relevance of state learning standards  
12 across subject areas in all grades is important now  
13 more than ever. We are at another critical moment in  
14 our history where racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia,  
15 sexism, and so many other phobias are at the  
16 forefront in our nation. In the halls of our Federal  
17 Government we are witnessing out in the open that if  
18 you are different than Anglo-Saxon European white,  
19 you are not valued as much as a human being. It's  
20 scandalous, but true, and as we stand on the  
21 shoulders of those who have fought to eradicate this  
22 kind of thinking and belief, we have the opportunity  
23 to lift up their fight and help to end this mindset  
24 and make sure that the future leaders of our country  
25 know better and value the life of all people no

1  
2 matter their race, color, religion, who they love or  
3 how they identify themselves. There is no better  
4 place to start and change this mindset than in  
5 schools and what we teach our babies. I'm the mom of  
6 six children who all attended New York City public  
7 schools and I can tell you they were not taught our  
8 true history. Sure, they learned a little about  
9 black history during the 28 days we celebrate black  
10 history month, but the vast majority of their history  
11 was taught by me and my family. That shouldn't be,  
12 and it can't continue to be if we're to survive as a  
13 people. I taught my kids that people are people,  
14 period. It didn't matter if they were different.  
15 And I can tell you, my house was always filled with  
16 their friends from all different backgrounds and  
17 cultures and we learned from each other. I don't  
18 want to have to buy books like James Loewen's "Lies  
19 My Teacher Told me," or Zen's [sic], "A People's  
20 History of the United States" for my grandkids to  
21 know their true history and the contribution that our  
22 people contributed to our society. I want them to  
23 learn in class from a relevant curriculum. I want  
24 their classmates whomever they may be to learn about  
25 it from the curriculum that is being taught in

1  
2 school. I want to see this taskforce bring back  
3 recommendations that are honest and truthful about  
4 the state of our current curriculum and provide  
5 solutions that are reflective of the children our  
6 schools served today. I hope they recommend that all  
7 involved in public education from State Ed. to  
8 districts and local school boards are all trained in  
9 culturally relevant standards. It is going to take  
10 every person in this school building and every person  
11 make a decision about our kids' curriculum and  
12 learning to understand and believe that our kids are  
13 relevant and the kind of education they receive must  
14 reflect who they are as students. Our kids deserve  
15 to be treated with respect, value for who they are  
16 and what they bring to the classroom and society.  
17 Thank you.

18 ROBERTO SOTO-CARRION: Good afternoon.  
19 My name is Roberto Soto-Carrion, and I'm Project  
20 Manager and Trainer at Border Crossers. At Border  
21 Crossers, our mission is to train and empower  
22 educators to dismantle patterns of racism and  
23 injustice in our schools and communities. We see  
24 racism at the center of intersecting systems of  
25 oppression and work collaboratively with teachers and



1 school leaders in New York to develop spaces for  
2 critical conversations around race, racism and  
3 oppression. In our trainings we analyze the ways  
4 racism manifests in our schools and discuss  
5 strategies to disrupt these processes and create  
6 spaces in which young people can thrive in racially  
7 equitable and liberating schools. At Border  
8 Crossers, we envision a world where all young people  
9 are afforded their full humanity in schools. We  
10 believe this begins with a basic acknowledgement that  
11 if we are not actively working to disrupt and  
12 dismantle racism in our schools and communities, then  
13 we are complicit in the reproduction of oppression  
14 against our youth. Research demonstrates that  
15 students benefit greatly from racially equitable  
16 environment in many ways. They are more likely to  
17 experience a sense of belonging and engagement when  
18 they see their culture, history and identities  
19 reflected in their curriculum. Stronger  
20 relationships between teachers and students lead to  
21 improved student outcomes. When students of color  
22 experience fewer racial macroaggressions and  
23 decreased stereotype threat we see greater academic  
24 success, resiliency and wellbeing. Furthermore, we  
25

1  
2 anticipate that these environment swill equip young  
3 people with the skills they need to become racial  
4 justice leaders in the future. In our workshops with  
5 educators throughout New York State, Border Crossers  
6 highlights a quote by the poet and essayist Adrienne  
7 Rich which reads, "When someone with the authority of  
8 a teacher describes the world and you're not in it,  
9 there's a moment of psychic disequilibrium as if you  
10 looked in a mirror and saw nothing." Unfortunately,  
11 many young people in New York education system are  
12 not seeing themselves reflected in the mirror. As  
13 racial justice trainers, we stress the importance of  
14 including curriculum materials that reflect the  
15 experiences and diverse racial identities of all New  
16 York students. This looks like stories that are not  
17 centered solely around right protagonists, history  
18 textbooks that do not begin African history with a  
19 tale of enslaved peoples, and an overall curriculum  
20 that has not ignored the lived realities of students  
21 of color. At Border Crossers, we acknowledge the  
22 need for curriculum that is culturally responsive.  
23 We are continually solicited with requests to support  
24 curriculum development and teacher training that is  
25 culturally sustaining as most educators are not

1  
2 equipped with the tools or training to assess their  
3 classroom materials or curriculum utilizing a racial  
4 equity framework. Even when teachers do have the  
5 tools and training we see they frequently struggle to  
6 find ways to integrate culturally responsiveness into  
7 their curriculum when you're being held accountable  
8 to learning standards and testing requirements that  
9 do not support this. As such, teachers often ask us  
10 how they can combat racism in their schools when they  
11 come up against bias standards and a curriculum that  
12 invisiblizes [sic] the diverse identities of so many  
13 of their students. Border Crossers advocates for  
14 school curriculum that connects students' histories  
15 and worlds to their respective subject matter and  
16 legitimizes and acknowledges students' real life  
17 experiences. We believe a culturally relevant  
18 curriculum must also address how students'  
19 intersecting identifies directly impact their  
20 experiences and their schooling. We support the  
21 Resolution 1415 calling upon New York State  
22 Department of Education to convene a taskforce to  
23 assess the cultural relevance of state learning  
24 standards across subject areas, elementary, middle  
25 and high school. We believe these standards must be

1  
2 strategically examined and redesigned to  
3 intentionally challenge and combat systems of  
4 oppression while affirming the lived realities and  
5 identities of all New York students, their families  
6 and their communities. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next,  
8 please.

9 NATALIE MCCABE-ZWERGER: Good afternoon.  
10 My name is Natalie McCabe-Zwenger, and I'm here in  
11 support of Resolution Number 1415. As the Director  
12 of the National Equity and Racial Justice Center at  
13 New York University I have the privilege of working  
14 with educators, school administrators and staff on  
15 addressing the impact of race, power and privilege in  
16 teaching and learning. I've worked with thousands of  
17 educators across the country and have yet to meet one  
18 who does not consider themselves to be culturally  
19 responsive. I do, however, meet many folks who  
20 struggle with how to operationalize the idea of  
21 cultural relevance. What does it require of them?  
22 What is incumbent upon them every day, and how does  
23 it relate to the larger practices within school? I  
24 frame this work telling educators I think all schools  
25 are culturally responsive. The heart of the work,

1  
2 though, lies in answering the question to whose  
3 culture are we most responsive. The flipside of that  
4 question being to whose culture are we least  
5 responsive. How are we fostering and promoting a  
6 positive climate that attends to race, culture,  
7 language, class, disability, gender, gender identity,  
8 sexuality, and religion of staff, families and  
9 students? This is the work of being culturally  
10 relevant. Schools need concrete understandings of  
11 what curriculum, pedagogy and school environments  
12 must look like in terms of cultural relevance in  
13 order to provide our students with the education to  
14 which they are entitled. I start with the work of  
15 Doctor Gloria Ladson-Billings and Doctor Geneva Gay  
16 to ground them in understandings of the research and  
17 foundations of this work. Doctor Ladson-Billings  
18 named three components of culturally relevant  
19 pedagogy. The first being academic achievement, then  
20 sociopolitical consciousness and cultural competence.  
21 In terms of academic achievement, educators must ask  
22 of each of their students when and how often does  
23 this student feel brilliant on any given day here at  
24 school. When does the student experience success and  
25 joy? If we struggle to name these moments or how

1 frequent they are and we're talking about students  
2 who are members of marginalized groups, then we know  
3 we have much work to do. Doctor Ladson-Billings also  
4 names sociopolitical consciousness which she  
5 suggested was teaching that prompted students to  
6 recognize, understand and critique current and social  
7 inequities. How relevant given this country's  
8 current sociopolitical context? Now, I'm not only  
9 an educator but also a lawyer, so I came here with  
10 some evidence for you today on the transformational  
11 power of culturally responsive teaching. A meta-  
12 analysis was published in 2016 that outlined some of  
13 the impact, not only in terms of traditional student  
14 achievement, but also in terms of other facets of  
15 student success such as motivation, empowerment,  
16 critical discourse, and agency. Students of color  
17 felt the curricula better reflected their lives,  
18 interest and passion. There was a positive impact on  
19 skills and conceptual understandings. There was  
20 increased engagement and feelings of self-efficacy.  
21 Students reported greater cultural connection and a  
22 myriad ways of developing knowledge. There was  
23 increased sociopolitical awareness and understanding,  
24 a deeper understanding of the impact of bias and  
25

1  
2 greater empowerment of students. Apart from all of  
3 that evidence, I can also attend to increased  
4 feelings of teacher efficacy, reported perceptions of  
5 safety of school community members, being their  
6 authentic selves, and more intentional relationship  
7 building. It would also be foolish to think that the  
8 impact of culturally relevant and responsive  
9 education is limited to curriculum and instruction.  
10 It is about shifting mindsets and experiences. It is  
11 deeply related to the need for more black and Latino  
12 teachers in our schools. If we don't see the  
13 connection between the inequities faced from pre-k to  
14 12 and the struggles we find in increasing the hiring  
15 of teachers and administrators of color, then we're  
16 not being honest. We have to do better addressing  
17 inequity, promoting racially just schools and  
18 teaching and growing and developing our future  
19 educators of color. I will close by sharing that I  
20 was in an elementary school this morning looking at a  
21 piece of opinion writing by a second grader who  
22 wrote, "In my opinion, what the President is doing is  
23 hurting because he is separating kids' families.  
24 That's not good. Kids are suffering this sacrifice."  
25 Sage words, words we need to hear. Words that is

1  
2 incumbent upon us to address by providing spaces that  
3 attend to the varied injustices of this world. We  
4 have to do better for our kids and this movement to  
5 analyze learning standards through the lens of  
6 cultural responsiveness, asking how can we better  
7 promote a positive climate for all racially,  
8 culturally and linguistically diverse students is one  
9 of the many steps in the work for equity. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much,  
11 and thank you to the whole panel for coming in, and  
12 thank you for reminding us about the intersection of  
13 all of these issues as well, and that's something  
14 I've very, very interested in and I think that that  
15 goes across all cultures. Thank you for reminding me  
16 also that schools are already culturally responsive  
17 but mostly to the white Eurocentric cultures that  
18 existed in the school system for so many years and so  
19 long ago and talking about cultural relevance. And  
20 also, something that we haven't talked too much about  
21 but I think is important to remember as well, at  
22 least in my opinion, is the cultural bias that's  
23 implicit in testing, also. Because I think that the  
24 way that we test our students also is bias towards  
25 our students of color, and I remember just some



1  
2 examples that I saw on tests. For example, you know,  
3 many city kids don't know what a porch is, but  
4 they sure do know what a terrace is. So, if you were  
5 to describe a story about a porch, it's something  
6 that's foreign to their experience in many cases, but  
7 a porch they would know. So, that's one thing. The  
8 other thing that I remember was on one reading test  
9 where they talked about a token and using a token,  
10 you know, the old tokens for the subway, right?  
11 Today, it would be metro card. This is how far back  
12 I go, right? But I bet you every kid in this city  
13 would know what a token is, you know? But if you  
14 take that same test and give it to kids in Long  
15 Island, they'd probably all fail it, you know? And  
16 so that doesn't have to do with race. That has to  
17 deal with the culture though that they've surrounded  
18 themselves and the environment in which they lived.  
19 But it also reminds me that I have never seen on any  
20 test or a Regent's Test a question about LGBT history  
21 or LGBT inclusion ever, and I've given some examples,  
22 and one example that I like to give is just to take  
23 President Obama's second Inaugural Address where he  
24 talked about from Seneca to Selma to Stonewall and  
25 ask what is the common thread there and why would the

1  
2 President put those three things together? Perfectly  
3 culturally inclusive and relevant. So we're not  
4 taking something and making it up. We're taking what  
5 has been said, what is real and asking teachers to  
6 implement those types of lessons in our schools. So,  
7 I really thank you all for coming in and for  
8 reminding us of how important culturally responsive  
9 education is, and thank you CEJ for really taking a  
10 lead on a lot of this stuff. Thank you very much.

11 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, so now our next  
13 panel is going to be Stephanie Zapata, Teens of TORCH  
14 Program, Elaine Paredes, Girls for Gender Equality  
15 and the Young Women's Initiative, Anna Garrison Bidel  
16 [sp?], NYCLU Teens Activist Project, excuse me,  
17 Mariama Cela-- I hope I said it right-- Planned  
18 Parenthood Youth Health Promoter, and Angelique  
19 Beluso, Young Women's Initiative, Girls for Gender  
20 Equality, and Jediah Spencer [sp?], YWCA and the  
21 Young Women's Advisory Council. Alright, so let me  
22 swear you all in. Can I ask you to raise your right  
23 hand, please? Do you solemnly swear or affirm to  
24 tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the  
25 truth and to answer Council Member questions

1  
2 honestly? Okay. Who would like to start? Alright,  
3 and just put that mic on, and make sure everybody  
4 states your names, because I called six, but we only  
5 have five on the panel.

6           STEPHANIE ZAPATA: Sure. So my name is  
7 Stephanie Zapata. I am the Youth Education Associate  
8 of the TORCH Program at the National Institute for  
9 Reproductive Health. I'm actually going to be  
10 reading testimony by some of our young people today.  
11 "Greetings. My name is Jante Zapata [sp?]. I'm 18  
12 years old. I attend Bronx Aerospace High School in  
13 Evander Childs Campus. I'm also a peer leader for  
14 TORCH and a member of SEANYC Youth Advisory Council.  
15 Thank you to the education Committee Chair Danielle  
16 Dromm for convening this hearing and all of the  
17 Council Members who have already committed to signing  
18 onto Bill 1028-A. As a facilitator for TORCH and a  
19 student of New York City, I've experienced firsthand  
20 the effects of a lack of sexuality education in  
21 schools. Students display an array of stigma  
22 revolving around the various layers of sexuality like  
23 gender identity, expression and sexual orientation.  
24 Simultaneously, well-meaning adults and teachers fall  
25 into this category just as easily. Luckily, Bill

1  
2 1028-A is the first step to changing this. Lessons  
3 in the currently provided health classes hardly seem  
4 didactic and a taskforce of well-informed individuals  
5 here to evaluate sex ed. would be revolutionary. As  
6 a city-- a city as powerful, opportunistic and  
7 progressive as New York should not fall behind in  
8 teaching its youth. Real sexuality education is not  
9 being taught, and the leaders of the future will  
10 suffer the consequences. Young educators such as  
11 myself who work towards spreading information and  
12 increasing awareness about sexual education are a  
13 good start for change, but Bill 1028-A is the next  
14 big move forward. I am personally asking you not to  
15 stop the flow of change. Everyone deserves access to  
16 accurate and comprehensive information so that we can  
17 make healthy and informed decisions for our bodies."  
18 That was the first one. "My name is Ashley Vasquez.  
19 I'm here today to tell you how much sex education  
20 means to me. I'm only 17 years old and to be honest,  
21 I could be doing anything right now, but I'm here  
22 writing to you. All of my life I've had to walk  
23 around learning about sex from my friends, the media  
24 and my peers. Never once did an adult sit and talk  
25 to me about sex, not my parents, nor my teachers. It

1  
2 wasn't until eighth grade when I finally had a health  
3 class, but that still wasn't sex education. I don't  
4 think adults see the importance of sex education, and  
5 it's because of this I had to wait until freshman  
6 year of high school to find a program like TORCH.  
7 TORCH taught me everything I know today. Thanks to  
8 this program I'm well educated not just on sexual  
9 health but also self-worth. While my school has a  
10 health clinic, they don't offer sexual health  
11 classes. So my question to politicians and educators  
12 is how can you have services for treatment but no  
13 education as prevention? As a teen, I know that  
14 others are going to have sex, and adults know it too.  
15 Why not teach us about it instead of having us figure  
16 things out on own, usually with misinformation?  
17 Sometimes I really don't understand. How hard can it  
18 be to help the generation do better?"

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.  
20 Next, please.

21 ELAINE PAREDES: Good afternoon. My name  
22 is Elaine Paredes. I'm 19 years old, and I'm a  
23 rising junior at Barnard College where I study  
24 political science. Thank you to the Council Members  
25 who have put in countless effort and time into the

1 issues that daily effect New York City residents.  
2  
3 With much gratitude, I applaud New York City Council  
4 Members' dedication and notable work. Today I  
5 represent the Young Women's Advisory Council at Girls  
6 for Gender Equity. We are part of the Young Women's  
7 Initiative that was launched by Speaker Melissa Mark-  
8 Viverito and the New York City Council to identify  
9 gaps in services for young women ages 12 through 24  
10 with a focus on cis and trans women of color. YWI  
11 brings together leaders and organizers who work with  
12 teens and young adults and advocates for them in all  
13 aspects of our society. With the goal of crafting  
14 policy recommendations that address racial, gender  
15 and other disparity. This is being done with young  
16 women at the center of the conversation as active and  
17 consistent participants in discussions. Girls for  
18 Gender Equity is also a member of SEANYC, a broad  
19 coalition working to pass and implement comprehensive  
20 sex education in grades K through 12. Comprehensive  
21 sexuality education is deeply important to me and my  
22 community, especially young people of color who  
23 identify as trans or gender non-conforming. As I  
24 reflected on the sex education that I received in  
25 school, I realized that it was not until I attended

1 an independent high school that I received sex  
2 education. Even then, the curriculum at my high  
3 school was not LGB and TNC inclusive and was made to  
4 serve the white students of this predominantly white  
5 institution. While I was fortunate enough to receive  
6 sex education and have access to a social worker at  
7 my school, I still felt like something was missing.  
8 There is an incredible stigma attached to sex that  
9 kept my peers and I from talking about it and from  
10 seeking advice. When we evaluate the way that sex  
11 education is being implemented, we must ensure that  
12 it is being delivered through a de-stigmatizing and  
13 culturally informed lens. In addition to providing  
14 young people with the proper sex information they  
15 need to make safe and healthy decisions, we need to  
16 empower them to speak up and to feel comfortable  
17 talking about sex and sexuality in school and in  
18 their community. It is outrageous that I have not  
19 received sex education from K through eighth grade.  
20 Many of my peers in middle school were already having  
21 conversations about intimacy, sexuality and gender,  
22 but only had the internet and media as resources for  
23 information. We should not leave the education of  
24 our young people up to the media, instead schools  
25

1 should be taking the lead on these conversations with  
2 scientifically correct culturally informed, LGB and  
3 TGN inclusive and de-stigmatizing curriculum. If we  
4 want to develop our young people to be the leaders of  
5 their own lives we must start with comprehensive sex  
6 education. The assessment of sex education and its  
7 implementation in public schools is crucial to  
8 ensuring that all students in New York City are  
9 receiving the proper information to lead healthier  
10 lives. As this taskforce is being established, I  
11 urge you all to consider the following questions:  
12 Who is at the table and how is missing? Having the  
13 voice of one young person is merely not enough to  
14 represent to represent the diverse needs of young  
15 people in the City. The taskforce should include the  
16 voices of multiple young people in order to  
17 effectively serve the need of students. A clear  
18 public policy that is sufficiently funded and include  
19 an achievable timeline for the implication of K  
20 through 12 standards and accountability measures for  
21 enforcement and evaluation will help ensure that  
22 every school has the ability to provide supportive  
23 and inclusive education to all of its students. As  
24 such, we respectfully request the Council's support  
25



1  
2 on the Proposed Intro 1028-A, and I thank the New  
3 York City Council for working with the Young Women's  
4 Advisory Council on making this a possibility through  
5 the Young Women's Initiative, and I look forward to  
6 working together to ensure that sis and trans girls  
7 of color and gender non-conforming youth of color  
8 receive adequate and comprehensive sex ed. Thank  
9 you.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Next, please?

11 MARIAMA CEILA: Good afternoon. My name  
12 is Mariama Ceila [sp?]. I'm 17 years old and I'm a  
13 high school student currently attending High School  
14 for Environmental Studies and I'm here on behalf of  
15 Planned Parenthood of New York City today. So, thank  
16 you to the Education Committee Chair, Daniel Dromm,  
17 for convening this hearing and all of the Council  
18 Members who have signed on to Intro 1028A. So, the  
19 need for comprehensive sexual health education in New  
20 York City public schools is dramatically increasing  
21 as our societies continue to progress. I'm here to  
22 speak in support of Intro 1028, an important step in  
23 achieving the goal for comprehensive sexual health  
24 education. I'm a Youth Health Promoter for Planned  
25 Parenthood of New York City, and what I do is visit

1 organizations and schools all over the City and teach  
2 all aspects of sexual health including anatomy,  
3 gender roles, STIs, sexual orientation, sexuality,  
4 etcetera. As a Youth Health Promoter, my sole job is  
5 to instill the knowledge I've learned to the youth of  
6 New York City. Being a Youth Health Promoter is  
7 important to me because it's one of the main jobs  
8 that help inform the youth on things that they're  
9 often ignorant of. Knowledge is the most important  
10 and powerful catalyst for change, and being a Youth  
11 Health Promoter grants people that knowledge. The  
12 biggest reason why I became a Youth Health Promoter  
13 is to assess people like me. Growing up I was raised  
14 in a household where sexual education was a taboo  
15 topic, and I didn't learn anything about it in  
16 school. I spent most of my childhood confused and  
17 left in the dark about something as important as  
18 sexual health. When I first started working as a  
19 Youth Health Promoter, I was introduced to a whole  
20 new world of sexual health. I was trained and taught  
21 everything there was to know about sexual health, and  
22 in that moment I really understood what most of the  
23 youth of our society was really missing out on.  
24 Becoming a Youth Health Promoter was one of the best  
25

1  
2 decisions of my life. I am open to a whole new world  
3 of connections and it made me recognize skills I  
4 never knew I had as well as work on ones I lack. As  
5 a student of a public school in New York City and a  
6 Youth Health Promoter, I know that real sexuality  
7 education is not being taught to every student. In  
8 my sophomore year of high school I took a health  
9 class and the teacher took a week of the class to  
10 teach about sexual health. What the class learned  
11 was very vague incomplete version of what sexual  
12 health was. There was a lack of explaining about  
13 puberty, anatomy and the act of sexual intercourse  
14 itself. Many of my classmates including myself were  
15 unaware that it was actually sexual education being  
16 taught. The information taught wasn't enough for me  
17 to know what kind of healthy decisions I should even-  
18 - I should or even could make about my body. The  
19 whole experience was part of the reason why I became  
20 a Youth Health Promoter in the first place. Public  
21 schools in New York City are lacking in the quality  
22 of sexual education being offered to students. As a  
23 Youth Health Promoter, students constantly ask me  
24 about places they can go if they're having trouble  
25 with an aspect of their sexual health. The fact that

1 students aren't being taught that kind of information  
2 really shows me that there's a lack in comprehensive  
3 sexual health education. New York City students need  
4 K-- New York City needs K to 12 comprehensive  
5 sexuality education in all schools. We deserve  
6 access to all the information we need to make healthy  
7 informed decisions about our bodies. Sexuality  
8 education is important to me because it's a step  
9 towards removing ignorance in our society. It can  
10 also prevent things like teen pregnancies and  
11 contraction of STIs, as youth will be informed on how  
12 to avoid and prevent these things. Thank you for the  
13 opportunity to testify today.

14  
15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Next, please.

16 ANGELIQUE BELUSO: Good afternoon. My  
17 name is Angelique Beluso. I am 23 years old, a  
18 graduate of Hunter College, a Reproductive Justice--

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Is that  
20 mic on?

21 ANGELIQUE BELUSO: Good afternoon. My  
22 name is Angelique Beluso. I am 23 years old, a  
23 graduate of Hunter College, a Reproductive Justice  
24 Leadership Institute Fellow with the National Asian  
25 Pacific American Women's Forum and currently the

1  
2 Community Organizer of Planned Parenthood of New York  
3 City. I'm here today as a member of the Young  
4 Women's Advisory Council of the Young Women's  
5 Initiative, an initiative launched by Speaker Melissa  
6 Mark-Viverito and the New York City Council to  
7 identify the gaps and services for young women ages  
8 12 to 24 with a focus on young women of color. YWI  
9 brings together leaders and organizers who work with  
10 teens and young adults with the goal of crafting  
11 policy recommendations and programming that address  
12 racial, gender and other disparities. This is being  
13 done with young women at the center of conversations  
14 in partnership with Girls for Gender Equity. As an  
15 anti-violence and education organization, Girls for  
16 Gender Equity is committed to centering young people  
17 of color as experts of their lives. Through our  
18 programming and advocacy, we are committed to the  
19 physical, psychological, social, and economic  
20 development of girls and women. Through education,  
21 organizing and physical fitness, GGE encourages  
22 communities to remove barriers and create  
23 opportunities for girls and women to live self-  
24 determined lives. To support with our self-  
25 determination, we must receive quality education that

1 is reflective of our lived experience. I'm here to  
2 ask you to call on New York State to convene a  
3 taskforce that will assess the cultural relevance and  
4 curricula across subject areas in middle school and  
5 high school. This taskforce will explore the  
6 grounding curriculum and core content that challenges  
7 racism, ableism and sexism and will be sure to be LGB  
8 and TNC affirming. The taskforce will also attest  
9 that curriculum be grounded in intersectionality that  
10 will allow all students to examine systems of  
11 oppression across academic discipline. This is  
12 especially important to me, because throughout middle  
13 school and high school while my education was filled  
14 the rich texts from authors such as Shakespeare,  
15 George Orwell and Virginia Wolfe, it was missing text  
16 that represented me and my experience as a bi-racial  
17 woman of color. I grew up struggling to understand  
18 what it meant to be a young Puerto Rican and Pilipino  
19 woman growing up in the Bronx without representation  
20 in the literature I was reading in school,  
21 understanding of race and gender amongst my peers, or  
22 subject to binaries and myths. In elementary school  
23 I was deemed not Pilipino enough amongst my Pilipino  
24 peers because I didn't look like them. In middle  
25

1 school I was deemed not Puerto Rican enough because I  
2 couldn't speak the language. All my life I was  
3 always seen as not enough because I did not possess  
4 the qualities or the characteristics of a typical  
5 Pilipino or Puerto Rican. Being mixed-race paved a  
6 lonely road for me. However, had there been more  
7 text in school that spoke to what it meant to be a  
8 woman of color, I would have learned earlier that  
9 being a woman of color goes much deeper than what I  
10 was taught. In college, texts by Gloria Anseldua  
11 [sp?], Audrey Lorde [sp?], Mitsui Amata [sp?] have  
12 not only inspired me but taught me to embrace my  
13 identity for all its worth. Texts with such an  
14 intersectional feminist lens will teach other young  
15 women, GNC and trans students of color to understand  
16 their identity, examine systems of oppression and  
17 become empowered by their identities. When young  
18 women, GNC and trans students of color are empowered  
19 by their identities, their abilities become  
20 limitless, and this is ultimately what we want for  
21 our students. I ask that you please consider  
22 convening a taskforce that will assess the cultural  
23 relevance of curriculum across middle school and high  
24 school. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

Before we go to our next speaker, I just want to say that we have been joined from students from the Borough of Manhattan Community College. Thank you for joining us at this Education Committee hearing.

Next, please?

ANNA GARRISON BIDEL: Okay. Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Anna Garrison-Bidel [sp?], and I am a sophomore at Bard High School Early College Queens and a member of the NYCLU's Teen Activist Project. Thank you to the City Council members for holding this meeting. I'm here to show y support of 1028-A. I strongly believe that the creation of this taskforce will benefit all New York City public high school students. As a member of the NYCLU Teen Activist Project I've seen firsthand the benefits of providing students with comprehensive sex ed., both in middle and high school, as well as the need for improvement across the board. By having a taskforce put in place to ensure that schools receive the same quality sex education, New York City can be a leader that other cities can look to for guidance. I'd like to share some information with the City Council Education Committee so that they can take



1  
2 this into consideration should a taskforce be put in  
3 place. I've had three comprehensive sex education  
4 courses in my life, one in sixth grade, one in eighth  
5 grade and one in ninth grade. Some people think that  
6 teaching sex ed. in early grades is a bad idea, but  
7 in my experience the sooner we teach students about  
8 their bodies, appropriate boundaries and healthy  
9 relationships, the better they understand their own  
10 feelings, values about the relationships, how to  
11 approach their sexuality, and how to assess sexual  
12 risks when they are older. The New York City  
13 Department of Education currently requires health  
14 education to be taught in both middle and high  
15 school. I consider myself lucky to have received  
16 three courses of sex ed., but there are so many  
17 students in New York City that are not so lucky.  
18 Some students do not even receive sex education until  
19 their senior year. This is unacceptable. This  
20 taskforce should ensure that public schools are  
21 following the requirements and that sex education is  
22 included in these health courses. New York City  
23 public schools must be held accountable, and this  
24 requirement needs to be enforced. This taskforce  
25 will have a number of different representatives, but

1 I noticed that only one student voice is considered.

2 It is essential that young people's voices are heard

3 and represented and there are diverse range of

4 identities that must be included. I believe that

5 there should be more than one public school student

6 that is part of this taskforce that can share

7 thoughts, ideas and insights into the decisions that

8 are made on behalf of youth in New York City.

9 Lastly, I appreciate that this taskforce will include

10 one representative that specializes in LGBTQ GNC

11 issues. As a member of the NYCLU's TAP program, we

12 recently surveyed New York City public school

13 students and found that only 36 percent were learning

14 about LGBTQ issues and relationships in their health

15 and sex ed. courses. It is so important that New

16 York City health and sex ed. courses discuss LGBTQ

17 identities and not just in high school, but even in

18 middle school. If this were the case, students would

19 understand the fluidity of sexuality better as well

20 as how to come to terms with it. In my experiences,

21 some of my friends from other schools didn't come out

22 until high school because they were scared of facing

23 harassment and bullying, and even then they felt

24 nervous and uncomfortable about it. Most sex

1 education is based on heterosexual relationships and  
2 pertains mostly to heterosexual students which is  
3 extremely harmful to the LGBTQ youth who need to  
4 learn about their bodies and their relationships just  
5 as much as heterosexual cis gender students. If  
6 LGBTQ students do not feel included or are not well  
7 informed on issues and risk that apply to them,  
8 they're more likely to become depressed, confused and  
9 more likely to take risks in the future. Students  
10 who do not identify with the LGBTQ community also  
11 benefit from hearing inclusive sex education so that  
12 they will understand the community more and are able  
13 to feel freer about their sexuality as well. It is  
14 crucial that the Council supports the proposed 1028-  
15 A. this taskforce cannot only hold New York City  
16 public schools accountable in ensuring that all  
17 students receive sex education as required, but can  
18 work hard to improve the current curriculum overall.  
19 Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts  
20 today. I would be happy to answer any questions you  
21 may have.

22  
23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, thank you all  
24 for coming in and for sharing your experiences. I  
25 always do appreciate hearing from young people who

1  
2 have gone through the system and experienced it  
3 themselves, and I said it-- talked a little bit about  
4 a number of stories that I remember from school as  
5 well, but when I was a teacher in fourth grade, and  
6 somebody mentioned this about learning about our  
7 bodies also, but I had a girl who had gone to the  
8 bathroom and when she came back she was hysterical,  
9 she was screaming, and she said she was bleeding. She  
10 didn't know she was going through menstruation  
11 because nobody had explained it to her. And imagine,  
12 you know, having that type of a meltdown in front of  
13 a whole class of students, you know, and it was just--  
14 - I really even didn't know how to handle it to be  
15 honest with you, you know? So, I think somebody  
16 said having it at lower grades-- it might have been  
17 you-- is really important also, and this was fourth  
18 grade not fifth grade. And then I also think about  
19 LGBT students and those who might experiment and the  
20 fluidity of sexuality and then the self-hatred that  
21 oftentimes people have for experimenting with a same-  
22 sex partner and how we can avoid that sense of self-  
23 hatred or shame or guilt if we can explain the  
24 spectrum of sexuality. So, that's why I really  
25 appreciate hearing all the stories and testimony from

1  
2 all of you on the panel. So, thank you very much for  
3 coming in. Thank you. Okay, our next panel: Josh  
4 Thomases, Bank Street College of Education, Veronica  
5 Benavides, Bank Street, Doctor Debbie Almontaser from  
6 Bridging Cultures Group, Muslim Community Network,  
7 and Mustafa Sullivan from Fierce. I'm expecting one  
8 more person on the panel. Is Mustafa here? Claribel  
9 Marmol, Community Healthcare Network? No. She just  
10 went out? Oh, there she is, okay. I think she sees  
11 us. You got a break, Claribel, come on up. Alright,  
12 great. Can I swear you all in and ask that you'll  
13 raise your right hand? Do you solemnly swear or  
14 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing  
15 but the truth and to answer Council Member questions  
16 honestly? Okay. Who should start? Where should we  
17 start? Debbie?

18 DEBBIE ALMONTASER: Good afternoon,  
19 everyone. Thank you, Councilman Dromm and all of the  
20 other Council Members who've actually sat with you  
21 throughout this. On this day, we welcome and applaud  
22 the New York City Council for introducing Resolution  
23 1415. Resolution 1415 calls upon the New York State  
24 Education Department to convene a taskforce to assess  
25 the cultural relevance of state learning standards

1  
2 across subject areas in elementary, middle and high  
3 school. It explores a grounding of standards and  
4 core content that challenges racism, ableism and  
5 sexism, and is LGB and TINGC affirming. In addition,  
6 I would also like to add challenging religious  
7 bigotry. When we acknowledge the hardship and unfair  
8 treatment of one community, we acknowledge our shared  
9 humanity. Let this be the start of how we combat all  
10 of the "isms" that exist in our society for all of us  
11 to live with respect and dignity. I thank Council  
12 Members Palma and the Speaker Council-- actually  
13 Council Member Melissa Mark-Viverito and Levin for  
14 their leadership to draft and propose this  
15 resolution. Their advocacy affirms the public  
16 education that public education is a civil right we  
17 must maintain for our children and other families.  
18 It is our moral responsibility to ensure that the  
19 strength and knowledge that students of color and  
20 their families bring to school rather than viewing  
21 students and families through a deficit lens and  
22 integrating families and communities of color into  
23 the learning process. Not to mention, we must also  
24 build on the cultures and languages of students as  
25 key building blocks for learning. We support the

1 Council's resolution for the New York State Education  
2 Department to convene a taskforce to assess the  
3 cultural relevance of state learning standards across  
4 subject areas in elementary, middle and high schools.  
5 We concur with partnering advocacy groups that the  
6 curriculum in New York City schools lacks cultural  
7 relevance for many students, and their experiences  
8 are underrepresented. A prime example are Arab  
9 Muslim and South Asian students who are mostly  
10 studied from a security lens. We believe that the  
11 best way to develop cultural relevance is to  
12 incorporate culturally responsive education and to  
13 the core content on all grade levels. CRE is an  
14 educational method that engages students in rigorous  
15 learning fostering critical thinking and analytical  
16 skills. CRE is a vehicle for academic study and  
17 contemporary issues that are meaningful and relevant  
18 to students' experiences. When students are engaged  
19 in learning that is reflective of their racial and  
20 cultural identities, it fosters academic success--  
21 and I'll be done in one minute. CRE develops  
22 students' ability to communicate and connect across  
23 cultures as well as empower them to become agents of  
24 social change. Research shows that for students of  
25

1  
2 color as well as their white peers, CRE decreases  
3 drop-out rates and suspension. It increase student  
4 participation, confidence, academic achievement, and  
5 increases graduation rates. Given the complex and  
6 challenging political climate we live in, it is  
7 critical that New York State Education become a  
8 national model of equity for embracing culturally  
9 responsive education to eradicate racism, sexism,  
10 xenophobia, islamophobia, homophobia, and other  
11 biases in public education. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Bank  
13 Street?

14 JOSH THOMASES: Chair Dromm, honorable  
15 members of the City Council [off mic]-- I'm on now.  
16 Chair Dromm, honorable members of the City Council,  
17 on behalf of Shael Suransky and Bank Street College  
18 of Education, I would like to thank you for inviting  
19 us today. We are deeply encouraged by the Council's  
20 efforts to address this issue and are honored to  
21 contribute to the conversation. My name is Josh  
22 Thomases. I'm the Dean of Innovation Policy and  
23 Research at Bank Street. As a teacher, a school  
24 leader, district leader, and now Dean, and in keeping  
25 with Bank Street's longstanding commitment to social



1 justice I've worked to launch and support our center  
2 on culture, race and equity at Bank Street where we  
3 partner with educators, community organizations, and  
4 families to create a more equitable and just learning  
5 environments for children. I'm joined today by Doctor  
6 Veronica Benavides, the Deputy Director of the Center  
7 with whom I'll be testifying jointly.

9 VERONICA BENAVIDE: CCRE [sic] was  
10 founded to address the very issues that are of focus  
11 today. Unfortunately, children in the United States  
12 must learn to navigate a highly racialized gendered  
13 and biased society. Whether children ultimately  
14 benefit from this societal structure or suffer the  
15 innumerable consequences, they are all deeply  
16 impacted. We believe that adults are uniquely  
17 positioned to either perpetuate the inequitable  
18 system we inherited or interrupt inequity through  
19 intentional practices and policies. To support  
20 adults in courageously addressing inequity and  
21 sustaining meaningful change, CCRE works on three  
22 levels, the personal, professional and institutional.  
23 Our research-based model for transformation has been  
24 successful in a variety of contexts including  
25 California, Louisiana, New York, Washington D.C., and

1  
2 Liberia. Our work in Washington D.C. highlights the  
3 transformative power of the CCRE model. In 2015, we  
4 collaborated with the District of Columbia public  
5 schools to work in three of the lowest performing  
6 elementary schools, particularly looking at over-  
7 suspension of African-American boys. We worked with  
8 29 classroom teachers and 17 other staff including  
9 school leaders, specialists, counselors, cafeteria  
10 workers and security guards over the course of six  
11 months. Qualitative data collected from participants  
12 showed significant shift in adult's knowledge and  
13 awareness in all three domains. Participants  
14 understood more clearly their own personal  
15 connections to issues of race and equity. They saw  
16 how that played out in their professional practices  
17 and they thought about the institution as a whole.  
18 As one school principal noted, the greatest outcome  
19 for our leadership team was the paradigm shift from  
20 deficit to strength-based mindset. It has helped us  
21 to realize that we have wrapped all of our  
22 interventions and addressing behavioral concerns  
23 around deficits, seeking to fix students, addressing  
24 their shortcomings, learning gaps, and behaviors.  
25 The result of our most successful school was a 20

1  
2 percent year-over-year decline in behavioral  
3 referrals included incidents such as classroom  
4 disruption, fighting, defiance, and physical  
5 aggression. This is what is possible when we face  
6 this work head-on, bravely having the tough  
7 conversations and shifting our practices. We want to  
8 commend the City Council for considering Resolution  
9 1415 and for pushing for statewide taskforce.

10 JOSH THOMASES: Systematic analysis by a  
11 range of researchers on the issues of race have shown  
12 that despite improvement in representations over  
13 years, deep patterns and narratives that reflect the  
14 European-- Euromerican experience and world views  
15 continue to dominate K12 textbooks and materials.  
16 It's equally clear that curriculum that elevate the  
17 narratives of traditionally marginalized groups  
18 promote academic achievements for students from those  
19 groups. Importantly, for white students who study  
20 such curricula, they gain in their regard for people  
21 from different racial backgrounds and increase their  
22 value of racial fairness. Having affirmed the need  
23 for culturally relevant curriculum we would offer  
24 three recommendations to build on the strength of the  
25 proposal to date. If I may? First, create clear

1  
2 expectations for how people are represented and  
3 studied. The power of the standards is in their  
4 clarity. The standards should affirm that people  
5 with marginalized histories must be studied in their  
6 fullness within the American experience and not just  
7 at their special month or moment, and should provide-  
8 - and the standards should provide clear examples of  
9 what this looks like. Second, create flexibility for  
10 school-level adjustments to reflect the centrality of  
11 the culture, histories and stories of the students  
12 themselves. Similar attempts for inclusivity in the  
13 past have often crashed against the mathematics of  
14 time. We don't have time. So if we add more of one  
15 group, we must take away from another. This is a  
16 false dichotomy that misunderstands the challenge of  
17 reframing the curriculum. One way to address this is  
18 by setting clear expectations and then allowing some  
19 time for some local flexibility. And third, train  
20 and support leaders, teachers and school staff. The  
21 implementation of new expectations must be paired  
22 with support for teachers that shift the way we as  
23 adults think about our privilege and identify and how  
24 we work with children and families in our schools.  
25 This is what has become so clear in our work at CCRE.

1  
2 We've consistently found that the adults in schools  
3 want to take this work on. Educators believe in  
4 working towards a more equitable society. We need  
5 to provide space for them to do this work themselves  
6 so that they can lead the transition to the kinds of  
7 classrooms we want for all of our children. It  
8 simply will not happen without this kind of  
9 intentional support. Thank you again for the  
10 opportunity to testify. We look forward to  
11 supporting the Council in these efforts.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next,  
13 please?

14 CLARIBEL MARMOL: Thank you, Chairman  
15 Dromm and members of the Committee for the  
16 opportunity to speak this afternoon. My name is  
17 Claribel Marmol. I am a Family Planning Health  
18 Educator with Community Healthcare Network. On  
19 behalf of CHN we fully support the New York City  
20 Council in passing Proposed Intro 1028-A and strongly  
21 support the Council's Resolution 1415. Creating a  
22 taskforce with experts in the field of sexual health  
23 education and LGBTQIA issues will ensure that  
24 sexually active young people and young people in  
25 general are able to make informed choices about their

1 health. These bills will reinforce the idea that  
2 comprehensive sex education is critically important  
3 and necessary to healthy development. Community  
4 Healthcare Network is also a member of the Sexual  
5 Education Alliance of New York City, SEANYC. As part  
6 of this, CHN is committed to enacting comprehensive  
7 sexual education in New York City schools. At CHN we  
8 have a robust sexual and reproductive health program  
9 in which we provide clinical and educational services  
10 and counseling. We also offer no-cost sexuality  
11 education to schools and community-based  
12 organizations throughout New York City. We are very  
13 proud and excited to be reaching so many young  
14 people, but we are also doing the job of our public  
15 schools. Most of the public schools we work with  
16 reach out to us because they do not feel equipped to  
17 provide comprehensive sex education. Generally, this  
18 is because of a lack of staff training, discomfort  
19 with sexual health content or a conflict in staff  
20 value. Over the past few years, I have been  
21 providing sexual education and counseling to patients  
22 in the South Bronx as well as facilitating sex  
23 education workshops in schools. Most recently I've  
24 been working on developing a youth-led media campaign  
25

1 on sexual and reproductive justice. Through this  
2 campaign we hosted a series of focus group  
3 discussions with youth and parents in Washington  
4 Heights. I can tell you that young people as well as  
5 their parents want this education. Young people  
6 express that many of their health classes only  
7 provide surface-level information about sexual  
8 health, but lack in-depth knowledge of things like  
9 resources outside of school where young people can  
10 receive sexual health services. They lack education  
11 on healthy relationships and communication. Young  
12 people want to learn how to talk to their peers,  
13 their partners and parents about sex. Students also  
14 want teachers that are highly qualified to teach  
15 about sexual health, direct quote: "Not just a gym  
16 teacher." Moreover, parents also believe that  
17 information about sexual health resources and access  
18 may only be effective if coming from the schools and  
19 from trained teachers, because often their kids are  
20 receiving inaccurate information from the internet  
21 and from other teens, leading to unsafe or risky  
22 sexual behaviors. In addition to the bills before  
23 you, CHN also recommends requiring adherence and  
24 accountability measures to the National Sexuality  
25

1  
2 Education Standards of Public School Students from  
3 kindergarten to 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Additionally, the  
4 Department of Education needs to create a meaningful  
5 implementation plan for the National Sexuality  
6 Education Standards. In closing, I strongly  
7 encourage the New York City Council to pass these  
8 bills. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much  
10 for all coming in, and just thinking, Debbie, as you  
11 were speaking as well. I had an incident where a  
12 former student came to my office as councilman and  
13 told me something that I always thought was really  
14 nice, but he said I was the only teacher that ever  
15 said the word "Muslim" in the school in his career,  
16 in his elementary school career. But imagine that  
17 experience for that child, you know? And then I'm  
18 thinking about, you know, what we could do, just even  
19 if we took the issue of Malala and you talked about  
20 that in your school, you know, and the significance  
21 of education for girls and the work that she's done  
22 as well, you know. So there are many ways I think  
23 that this could be presented and integrated, and I  
24 think Bank Street mentioned this as well about not  
25 having to just take time, you know like, "Oh, I



1  
2 couldn't do black history because it's just adding  
3 another thing onto the curriculum." When it actually  
4 should just be part of the curriculum and integrated  
5 into the curriculum. And I had the opportunity to  
6 visit Bank Street about a week and a half or so ago,  
7 maybe two weeks ago, and immediately when I walked in  
8 I saw LGBT flyers on the wall. I think it was for  
9 LGBT Parents Group that night, but just that alone,  
10 and I said it before when the Deputy Chancellor was  
11 here, created a welcoming environment and a message  
12 that it was okay and safe to talk about those issues.  
13 So, thank you, and thank you Bank Street for being a  
14 leader in that. Yes, and then I talked so much about  
15 the sex education stuff already, but how important it  
16 really is for the self-esteem and value of our kids  
17 in the system to understand how their bodies work.  
18 So, thank you. I know Council Member Barron has a  
19 question or a comment.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Just a comment. I  
21 wanted to thank the panel for coming, Doctor  
22 Almontaser for the work that you do, for all of you,  
23 what you're doing. I just have to put into the  
24 record that I am a graduate of Bank Street College of  
25 Education, and they've always been in the forefront

1  
2 of leadership changing what's going on and being  
3 progressive. Thank you.

4 JOSH THOMASES: And we want to thank you,  
5 Councilman, Councilwoman for your support in the work  
6 we're doing in your district.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Now I know why you're  
9 so smart, Councilwoman. Thank you very much and  
10 thank you to the panel as well.

11 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, our next panel:  
13 David Jay from Asexual Visibility and Educator  
14 Network. David here? Yeah, okay. Marissa Munoz from  
15 Hispanic Federation. Marissa still here? Okay,  
16 great. Jeremy Segel [sp?], I think is here on his  
17 own. Rachel Morgan Peters from Peer Health Exchange.  
18 Is Jeremy Segel here? Okay. Okay, let's do  
19 Elizabeth Munsky from Live Out Loud, and JD  
20 Valladares-Williams from Live Out Loud also.  
21 Alright, let me swear you all in. Can I ask if  
22 you'll raise your right hand, please? Do you  
23 solemnly swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole  
24 truth and nothing but the truth and to answer Council  
25

1  
2 Member questions honestly? Okay. Should we start  
3 over here? Okay.

4 JD VALLADARES-WILLIAMS: Thank you, Chair  
5 Dromm and everyone present. My name is JD  
6 Valladares-Williams and I work for Live Out Loud.  
7 Why is representation important? Imagine you show up  
8 to a party wearing a blue shirt. Everyone else is  
9 wearing white. You hesitate for a moment, wonder if  
10 you missed something on the invite, you start to feel  
11 uncomfortable, and feel like you're an outsider. And  
12 all the sudden you see a person wearing a blue shirt,  
13 and another person wearing green pants. You sigh  
14 with relief and no longer feel like the outsider.  
15 You start to mingle and feel comfortable, navigating  
16 the space. I know this is a simple analogy, but it's  
17 a similar feeling to opening up a book in school and  
18 never seeing someone like yourself. Like I said, I'm  
19 the manager of Youth Programming at Live Out Loud, a  
20 nonprofit that works with Gender and Sexuality  
21 Alliance Clubs in high schools to inspire and empower  
22 LGBT youth in New York City. We cover different  
23 topics each month from how to address conflict to  
24 intersectionality to LGBT history. In the month of  
25 December, we covered LGBT history during our

1 meetings. We spoke about the Stonewall riots which  
2 took place right here in New York City in Greenwich  
3 Village. We spoke about the AIDS epidemic and Act Up  
4 and how LGBT folks and their allies stopped traffic  
5 right outside this building on Park Row demanding  
6 change. The students didn't know about those events  
7 or that the Pride Parade is a commemoration of the  
8 riots. They had no idea how influential their own  
9 city was in the fight for LGBT rights. At the end of  
10 the meeting we went around the room describing one  
11 word for how we were feeling, and one student after  
12 another said they were inspired, empowered or  
13 informed. The lesson plan I've created for the month  
14 of April is called LGBTQ Historical Figures. I  
15 discussed with the students the vital roles of LGBT  
16 individuals and history, from Alan Turing helping the  
17 Allies win the World War by breaking the Nazi code  
18 and inventing the predecessor of the modern computer  
19 to Bayard Rustin organizing the march on Washington  
20 for jobs and freedom where Martin Luther King gave  
21 his famous "I have a dream" speech, and launching the  
22 A. Philip Randolph Institute to promote racial  
23 justice and secure jobs and freedom for all  
24 Americans. So many students have come up to me after  
25

1 the meetings thanking me for teaching them about the  
2 roles of LGBT people in history, people they might  
3 have heard of but never knew they were LGBT, people  
4 they have never heard of and now are proud to be part  
5 of their community. Frankly, I didn't think it was  
6 going to be so much positive feedback. After all,  
7 who wants to voluntarily stay at school after school  
8 listening to someone speak with PowerPoint slides  
9 after doing that all day? That alone should tell you  
10 how thirsty students are for learning about people  
11 like them, for finding that people have changed the  
12 world that are LGBT, and for encouragement to go out  
13 and do the same. I'm almost finished. What is the  
14 point of going to school? To me, school means going  
15 into a space where people help you reach your full  
16 potential, a place that shapes you into being a  
17 contributing member of society, a place where you're  
18 empowered, inspired and informed. If you don't teach  
19 LGBT students about themselves, you cannot achieve  
20 these goals. According to GLISEN, a 25<sup>th</sup> Teen  
21 National School Climate Survey, in New York State 87  
22 percent of LGBT students heard the word "gay" used in  
23 a negative way, and 77 percent heard homophobic  
24 remarks in school. If we failed to cover LGBT  
25

1  
2 culture as well as other minorities, how do we expect  
3 larger student body to acknowledge and appreciate the  
4 contributions to society? If bullying and prejudice  
5 are a demonstration of ignorance, isn't education the  
6 answer? So, just going back to my original analogy,  
7 what do you think happens when a student walks into a  
8 classroom and everyone is wearing white, and they're  
9 only taught about people wearing all white, and they  
10 don't see in their textbooks someone with green pants  
11 or a blue shirt? Would you feel included, welcomed,  
12 or would you feel uncomfortable like an outsider who  
13 just walked into the wrong place? Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.  
15 Next, please?

16 RACHEL MORGAN PETERS: Good afternoon.  
17 My name is Rachel Morgan Peters. I'm the New York  
18 City Executive Director at Peer Health Exchange and a  
19 public school parent. Thank you to the Education  
20 Committee Chair Danny Dromm for convening this  
21 hearing and to the entire Committee for their  
22 continued support of health education. I'm here to  
23 speak in support of Intro 1028 and Reso. 1415 to push  
24 for comprehensive sexuality education as reality, not  
25 an aspiration. Peer Health Exchange is a nonprofit

1 organization that works in public school high schools  
2 in New York City and across the country to empower  
3 young people with the knowledge, skills and resources  
4 to make healthy decisions. We train college student  
5 volunteers, many DOE grads, to teach a skills-based  
6 health curriculum to 9<sup>th</sup> grade students. Along with  
7 mental health and substance use, sexuality education  
8 is a core part of our program. Giving young people  
9 tools to navigate decision-making around sex,  
10 relationships and their health over the course of  
11 their lives. We are a proud member of SEANYC.  
12 According to the DOE's own recent reports, virtually  
13 all New York City high school students receive health  
14 education, but as Council Member Dromm noted earlier,  
15 that data is not broken out by grade level, and as we  
16 learned from the DOE at the last hearing for Local  
17 Law 15, about half of all students received their  
18 health education in junior or senior year. Despite  
19 the Office of School Wellness's strong recommendation  
20 that health ed. instruction take place in grade nine  
21 or 10. In SEANYC student poll, we also heard from  
22 young people themselves that want more sexuality  
23 education classes that start in earlier grades and  
24 are more inclusive of LGBTQ identities. Our program  
25

1 seeks to close that gap, and this taskforce can  
2 expedite change. Peer Health Exchange partners with  
3 45 high schools across the City reaching over 5,800  
4 ninth graders this year would not be receiving health  
5 education, or whose school has identified a need for  
6 extra support and talking about critical health  
7 issues like sexual health, inclusive of sexual  
8 identity. As we've discussed, throughout all New  
9 York City public schools there are only 153 licensed  
10 health educators, meaning that health education  
11 classes are taught by a teacher teaching out of  
12 license, which is allowed, but students are then  
13 often not learning sexual health or being taught by  
14 instructors who are unlicensed or untrained. Schools  
15 need the resources, though, to hire more health  
16 educators, train current teachers and implement  
17 accountability measures so they can provide the  
18 health education that students deserve and that is  
19 required by state law. I hope the taskforce will  
20 assess how to bring these resources. Today, we are  
21 focused on sexuality education, but sex ed. should  
22 not be discussed in a vacuum. Young people must  
23 learn about their mental health, sexual health,  
24 sexual identity, substance use, and how to access  
25



1  
2 resources from mental health counselors to  
3 adolescent-friendly health services in conjunction.  
4 These issues are tied together and we need to see  
5 people as our whole selves capable of making informed  
6 decisions about their health. Young people deserve  
7 equitable opportunities to learn about and act for  
8 their health, especially their sexual health. Peer  
9 Health Exchange partners closely with New York City  
10 schools and the Office of School Wellness, a  
11 wonderful resource to New York City schools. We meet  
12 with hundreds of principals annually and believe they  
13 would love to offer high-quality health education to  
14 their students. We understand that these desires are  
15 not enough in a world of competing priorities with  
16 real consequences for principals. New York City must  
17 implement a health education program in all schools  
18 in all grades that is funded and includes robust  
19 training and resources for teachers, along with  
20 effective enforcement measures to ensure  
21 accountability. Peer Health Exchange is proud to  
22 support the proposed legislation. Thank you for the  
23 opportunity to testify.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

25 Next please.

1  
2           DAVID JAY: Thank you so much. My name  
3 is David Jay. I'm the founder and Board Chair of the  
4 Asexual Visibility and Education Network, the world's  
5 largest organization of individuals identified as  
6 asexual. And I'm here to advocate that-- first of  
7 all, to express my support for 1028-A and to advocate  
8 for the inclusion of asexuality in health education  
9 curriculum in New York City, a process that's already  
10 begun, and for the taskforce to be educated around  
11 and to promote ASE [sic] inclusive sex education, and  
12 I'll explain a little about what that means. So, I  
13 like many New York City public students identify as  
14 asexual which means that I don't experience sexual  
15 attraction. I still have a desire to form close  
16 intimate relationships, and like many students when I  
17 was in high school I felt like that meant that there  
18 was something wrong with me. I felt like I was  
19 broken because the message I received from popular  
20 culture, from my teachers were that sexuality was a  
21 vital part of what it meant to be human. And when I  
22 was in high school, which is true of the young  
23 asexual people that I work with here in New York on a  
24 regular basis, that small message, acknowledgement  
25 that I existed from someone in a position of

1 authority could have made a really big difference.  
2 It could have been the difference between me seeking  
3 intimacy on my own terms and me feeling like I needed  
4 to fix myself by engaging in sexuality that I didn't  
5 want. So, I-- and so I mentioned a little bit  
6 engaging with students. The best science we have--  
7 it's still new-- is that between one and three  
8 percent of the general population doesn't experience  
9 sexual attraction which means that in most schools,  
10 in most classrooms there's a pretty decent chance  
11 that you're going to have asexual students. New York  
12 has been really a leader in investigating what  
13 asexual inclusive sex ed. might look like due in  
14 large part to the efforts of Jared Fox, the LGBTQ  
15 liaison with the DOE. And what we found is that the  
16 things that make good asexual inclusive education are  
17 dovetailed really nicely with comprehensive sex ed.  
18 in general. It's about acknowledging that people  
19 have different levels of sexuality and that's okay.  
20 It's about acknowledging that sex and love are  
21 different things and that you can love fully and  
22 completely without sexuality. It's about talking  
23 about consent and talking about the importance of  
24 consent not only in sexual situations, but of on  
25

1 other kinds of touch and other kinds of intimacy.

2 And so I've given you all some materials. I'm also

3 happy to share them with other educators here in the

4 room about what it means to be inclusive of asexual

5 students when doing this work. I would encourage you

6 to pursue them, and where my community is happy to be

7 an ally in educating the taskforce about these

8 important issues. Thank you.

9  
10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, and you do

11 have a very good flyer, very interesting flyer which

12 is really laid out very well, and so you have a lot

13 of people here. I hope you gave them out before

14 people left also, but I found it to be very helpful

15 in understanding the issue. Plus, I have a staff

16 member who has been educating me on this issue as

17 well. So, thank you.

18 MARISSA MUNOZ: Good afternoon. My name

19 is Marissa Munoz, and I'm the Senior Director of

20 Education Policy at the Hispanic Federation. Chair

21 Dromm and Committee Members, thank you for the

22 opportunity to testify on behalf of the Hispanic

23 Federation and our member agencies in regards to

24 distribution of information on gifted and talented

25 programs. Helping close the Latino achievement gap

1 is important to the mission of our organization.  
2  
3 However, that cannot happen when standards and  
4 expectations are disproportionately lower for some  
5 communities and others. Unfortunately, this is  
6 evidence by the lack of gifted and talented programs  
7 in predominantly Latino and African-American  
8 communities. Sixty-one percent of students in the  
9 Bronx are Latino and 28 percent are black. Yet,  
10 before the 2016 school year there were no gifted and  
11 talented programs in the Bronx. The gap is glaring.  
12 We need to ensure that high standards are being  
13 implemented and that teachers and administrators have  
14 high expectations for all students, allowing them to  
15 have access to greater opportunities regardless of  
16 their zip code. Let's close the achievement gap now,  
17 and one of the first steps in doing so is sharing  
18 information to students and parents in their native  
19 language. The New York City Department of Education  
20 should also hold borough-wide sessions with  
21 translators. Professional development should be  
22 provided to parent coordinators on the application  
23 process. The message communicated needs to include  
24 the value of the program and its positive academic  
25 impact on the students. The New York City Department

1  
2 of Education should continue to partner with  
3 community-based organizations to distribute the  
4 information to students and parents. These  
5 organizations understand the needs of the community  
6 and would help ensure that more students, especially  
7 those of color, are aware of the program and thus  
8 participating. In regards to the New York State  
9 Education Department to convene a taskforce to assess  
10 the cultural relevance of state learning standards,  
11 while New York City schools are some of the most  
12 culturally and linguistically diverse in the nation,  
13 enormous achievement gaps remain. In 2016, only 67  
14 percent of black and Latino students and 31 percent  
15 of English language learners graduated from high  
16 school in four years compared to 82 percent of all  
17 white students. So research demonstrates that for  
18 students of color as well as white students that  
19 culturally relevant curriculum decreases drop-out  
20 rates and suspensions and increases student  
21 participating, confidence, academic achievement and  
22 graduation rates. Even in such a diverse and  
23 progressive community it is astounding that Latino  
24 and black history courses take a backseat to the more  
25 traditional history that excludes or limits the

1  
2 presence of these populations. For example, there is  
3 little to no mention of Cesar Chavez, a Mexican-  
4 American farm worker, labor leader and civil rights  
5 activist who cofounded the National Farm Workers  
6 Association and devoted his life to fighting for  
7 workers' rights. Given the toxic political climate,  
8 it is critical that the New York City Department of  
9 Education become a national model of equity by  
10 embracing culturally responsive education to  
11 eradicate racial disparities in public education. In  
12 regards to creating a sexual education taskforce to  
13 review sexual education curriculum, clearly there is  
14 a need to ensure that sexual education curriculum for  
15 our young people is a comprehensive and addresses  
16 pregnancy prevention, healthy relationships and is  
17 inclusive of the LGBTQ+ community. Just one last  
18 sentence. I'll just-- in summary, the Hispanic  
19 Federation would like to thank you for inviting to  
20 testify on the laws and resolutions being considered  
21 today. It's important for us to have a voice in  
22 matters that clearly impact youth throughout the  
23 city, and it's our mission to ensure that Latino  
24 students have access to high-quality education  
25 including access to gifted and talented programs as

1  
2 well as a curriculum that is inclusive and it values  
3 different cultures including their own.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I'm just curious to  
5 know if the DOE has reached out to the Hispanic  
6 Federation on thee three issues that we're hearing  
7 today, on culturally responsive education and on--

8 MARISSA MUNOZ: [interposing] Currently,  
9 no. we've been working with CEJ on the issue.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: With what?

11 MARISSA MUNOZ: With CEJ, but that's the  
12 extent of it.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And on sexual-- the  
14 taskforce on sex education.

15 MARISSA MUNOZ: We haven't heard from the  
16 DOE.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I think that would be  
18 really crucial because, you know, this is a  
19 stereotype, but correct me if I'm wrong it, but I do  
20 think that there's a large Catholic community within  
21 the Hispanic community.

22 MARISSA MUNOZ: You're correct, yes.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Right.

24 MARISSA MUNOZ: And it's typically taboo  
25 to talk about these things, and so I didn't have time



1  
2 to read our testimony, but our stance is that we  
3 believe that the key to knowledge is power and it's  
4 best for young people to have the information and  
5 support that they need to stay healthy. So, we do  
6 support it, and we understand that, you know, there  
7 need to be information given to parents especially in  
8 their native languages to help conquer that.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And one thing that  
10 they have been fairly successful with is the work  
11 that Jared Fox has done as the LGBTQ liaison, and I  
12 think one of the tactics that he used was to work  
13 with parents first before he went into schools to  
14 form GSA's, and I just think that you're a vital  
15 connection in that, and I want to encourage that with  
16 the Department of Education.

17 MARISSA MUNOZ: Great. Thank you so  
18 much.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next,  
20 please.

21 ELIZABETH MUNSKY: Hi, and thank you to  
22 Chair Dromm and the other Council Members. IN  
23 support for proposal initiative 1028 I'm here to  
24 discuss the importance of a sexual health education  
25 taskforce, more specifically the importance of having

1  
2 a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender-  
3 nonconforming, or LGBT GNC for short, inclusive  
4 sexual health education. My name is Elizabeth  
5 Munsky. I'm the Educational Program Manager at Live  
6 Out Loud, a nonprofit that works with LGBT TNG  
7 students and the schools they attend. To help  
8 illustrate the importance of an inclusive sexual  
9 health education, I would like to share a few stories  
10 from our work in the New York City high schools. One  
11 of Live Out Loud's programs partners with high school  
12 Gender and Sexuality Alliances' groups where LGBT GNC  
13 student and their allies meet to discuss different  
14 topics, current events, things pertaining to the LGBT  
15 GNC community as a whole and within their school.  
16 During this particular meeting, the curriculum was an  
17 introduction to the LGBT GNC terminology. The  
18 curriculum delved into the definitions and  
19 intricacies of sexual orientation, gender and gender  
20 identity. While the students in the Gender Sexuality  
21 Alliance knew most of the terms and in fact started  
22 listing out more, they discussed a lack of correct  
23 and legitimate information known by their peers. The  
24 students discussed the dangers that came with the  
25 lack of correct information, mainly discussing anti-

1  
2 LGBT GNC bullying. I'd like to lay out some of the  
3 bullying those students have experienced: being  
4 physically shoved while being called a fag, being  
5 singled out in the hallway for having a LGBT GNC  
6 pride ribbon on their backpack, being called  
7 disgusting and many other words that I do not need to  
8 repeat. One form of discrimination that students  
9 hear on a daily basis is a term that many students  
10 say without thought, "That's so gay." Meaning that's  
11 so weird, strange, stupid, or just plainly something  
12 bad. Students said these experiences leave them  
13 constantly on guard and defensive. The students  
14 explained that these feelings are a distraction,  
15 these feelings distract them during class, in the  
16 hallways, during afterschool programming while doing  
17 their homework at home on the weekends. These  
18 feelings can distract students throughout all of  
19 their day. Students have opened up about not feeling  
20 comfortable in school because of how other students  
21 have treated them and the words they hear in their  
22 classrooms and hallways. Gender and Sexuality  
23 Alliances should not be the only place LGBT and GNC  
24 students feel safe, and they should not be the only  
25 places students have the opportunity to learn about

1  
2 what it means to be LGBT and GNC. During a  
3 discussion about LGBT and GNC history, one students  
4 began talking about their own exposure to the  
5 transgender community. This student, a senior,  
6 identifies as a trans man. He began to explain how  
7 confused he was about his own identity, how had he  
8 known more or anything at all about the transgender  
9 community via a more inclusive sexual education, he  
10 would have had a much earlier time coming to  
11 understand who he is and what that means, again, a  
12 feeling that left him distracted, unable to focus,  
13 and unable to focus on his education. I'm going to  
14 skip through. Beyond the support and affirmation and  
15 relief LGBT inclusive sexual education can bring, it  
16 is also important to look at the health disparities  
17 that exist for LGBT and GNC individuals, both youth  
18 and adults as the lessons we learn in our sexual  
19 education classes become our foundation as adults.  
20 Having an LGBT GNC inclusive sexual health education  
21 will help reduce the disparities I'm about to discuss  
22 simply by making students aware and by giving them a  
23 place and person to ask questions to. A disparity  
24 that is generally known is a higher rate of HIV/AIDS  
25 transmission in the men who have sex with men

1  
2 community. In 2015, two-thirds of the HIV diagnoses  
3 in New York State were from men who have sex with  
4 men. If this large of a disparity exists, where is  
5 the conversation for our students? Where is their  
6 opportunity to discuss the very real dangers that  
7 exist in their lives?

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Thank you  
9 to the panel. You know, one time I went into a  
10 school, a junior high school, and every other word  
11 out of the kids' mouths was exactly what you  
12 described, either saying "faggot" or "that's so gay."  
13 And when I asked the administrator who was walking me  
14 around the school how could he just let them get  
15 away with it and everything like that, and he was  
16 like, "Oh, they don't really mean that when they say  
17 it." You know? And I don't know that maybe, they  
18 maybe, maybe. I don't know. Maybe they don't know  
19 that, you know, gay means, you know, men who have sex  
20 with men or, you know, women who have sex with women  
21 or whatever. Maybe they're not-- maybe they're not  
22 that aware, but they definitely know that it's a  
23 negative. And so by saying it they're reinforcing  
24 that negative thing over and over and over again. I  
25 was just amazed about how free flying those words

1  
2 were coming out of kids' mouths in this junior high  
3 school in Queens. Anyway, thank you for bringing  
4 that to our attention. Does Live Out Loud also-- do  
5 you have a scholarship? Do you offer scholarships?

6 ELIZABETH MUNSKY: Yeah, we do. We also  
7 offer three scholarships at 10,000 dollars for LGBTQ  
8 students who make positive impact in their--

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] And you  
10 gave one to Rocky Senabrio [sp?] last year?

11 ELIZABETH MUNSKY: Yes, I believe. Yes,  
12 we did.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes, okay. We're very  
14 close to Rocky, and we're very appreciative of what  
15 you've done for Rocky. And for Ms. Morgan Peters,  
16 I'm just curious, what is the reaction from  
17 principals when you go in? You mentioned you work  
18 with I think you said hundreds of principals.

19 RACHEL MORGAN PETERS: We've talked to  
20 hundreds and we're in 45 schools, yes.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, you know, in  
22 terms of teaching sex education, do you get pushback,  
23 much pushback, or how does it-- what happens?

24 RACHEL MORGAN PETERS: We usually don't  
25 get pushback around teaching sex education. I think

1  
2 that often principals are-- who work with us are  
3 happy to have our young people coming and talking  
4 about these sensitive health issues, and knowing that  
5 we're going to be doing it in a way that's evidence  
6 informed and inclusive, because that's a challenge I  
7 think right now with asking a teacher to teach out of  
8 license. It's really-- it depends who on your staff  
9 is going to be good at that, and so that's-- without  
10 having a dedicated--

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] In some  
12 ways you're relieving them--

13 RACHEL MORGAN PETERS: [interposing]  
14 health teacher.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: of the responsibility  
16 of the teaching of it, right?

17 RACHEL MORGAN PETERS: So, we're not-- we  
18 do not teach the full health--

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Oh,  
20 okay.

21 RACHEL MORGAN PETERS: class, right? We  
22 only teach a 13-session-- we only come in for 13  
23 sessions and we cannot be counted for their health  
24 curriculum.

25

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: But it's a way to  
3 ensure--

4 RACHEL MORGAN PETERS: [interposing]  
5 Right.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: that something is  
7 getting done, and I think principals might appreciate  
8 that.

9 RACHEL MORGAN PETERS: I think that's  
10 right, and are able-- you know, as I mentioned, you  
11 know, principals are under huge amount, you know, a  
12 huge amount of stress of what they can program within  
13 a day and without us pushing for health to be  
14 programmed earlier. It's not going to be, right?  
15 The things that are measured and where there is more  
16 pressure around that are going to be prioritized, and  
17 so but still principals want to do the best for their  
18 students, and so I think that's where we come in as  
19 we can be at least providing 13 sessions, but until  
20 we have sort of teeth to the mandate that health  
21 should happen in ninth and 10<sup>th</sup> grade, principals  
22 aren't going to program it.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And what levels are  
24 you doing this on?



1  
2 RACHEL MORGAN PETERS: We go into ninth  
3 grade.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: To ninth grade.

5 RACHEL MORGAN PETERS: Right. And that's  
6 not that it shouldn't help-- shouldn't be K-12.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Right.

8 RACHEL MORGAN PETERS: We support K-12  
9 health. We just think we do it best for ninth grade.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Maybe that's something  
11 the taskforce should be looking at as well is  
12 continued-- is giving additional funding to  
13 nonprofits that are actually able to go in and do  
14 this work with expertise.

15 RACHEL MORGAN PETERS: We would love  
16 that.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Sure. Yes. Okay.  
18 But I agree, I think that's a way to ensure that it  
19 gets done as well.

20 RACHEL MORGAN PETERS: Yeah, it's an  
21 interesting question right now around who's going to  
22 teach health, too. I mean, I think just even in the  
23 taskforce looking at or talking with CUNY around  
24 who's graduating because we've stopped hiring health  
25 educators, so we stopped graduating health educators.

1 So when we're talking about there only being 153  
2 licensed health educators, well that makes sense. I  
3 mean, where are we going to-- we're not going to be  
4 able-- there's not a well that we could start drawing  
5 from. So I'm also interested in the taskforce sort  
6 of thinking about what can we do here creatively in  
7 working with our systems across the City? So, could--  
8 - should physical educators actually start to have to  
9 be good at teaching health education and trained to  
10 do that? I don't know what it's going to be. It's  
11 probably going to have to be more creative than just  
12 keep saying the same things that we've been saying.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Well, we look  
15 forward to continuing to work with you, and I want to  
16 thank the whole panel for coming in and sharing with  
17 us. Thank you.

18 RACHEL MORGAN PETERS: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, maybe some  
20 people are not here. I'm not sure. Doctor Elizabeth  
21 Payne [sp?]? No. Deborah Levine from ACRIA. Yeah,  
22 okay, come on, Deborah. Jacqueline Matora [sp?]?  
23 Did I say it right? Katherine Chambers, Project  
24 Reach? Katherine is still here, I know that. Monique  
25 Watson, District 18? No. Jaleel Francis? Jaleel

1 here? Yeah. And Marsha Jean Charles [sp?], Brother-  
2 - okay. Has everybody who wanted to speak been  
3 called? Okay. Alright, do you want to raise your  
4 right hand and I'll swear you in? Do you solemnly  
5 swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth  
6 and nothing but the truth and to answer Council  
7 Member questions honestly? Should we start with this  
8 young man over here?  
9

10 JALEEL FRANCIS: Good afternoon. My name  
11 is Jaleel Francis and I'm a current high school  
12 student at Innovation Diploma Plus and an Advocacy  
13 Intern with the Children's Defense Fund New York.  
14 Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My  
15 comments will focus on Resolution 1415 and the need  
16 for cultural relevant learning standards. As both a  
17 high school student and an advocate for restorative  
18 practices and discipline reform, I know that we need  
19 cultural responsive education in our schools. Many  
20 of our schools fall short accommodating students'  
21 learning needs or providing the resources and kinds  
22 of teaching that make us connect with our education  
23 system. When you construct a lesson relevant to  
24 students' life and culture it minimizes the chance of  
25 students becoming disinterested or disruptive because

1  
2 it's helped the students and teachers build  
3 relationships and respect for one another. It shows  
4 the student that the teachers care about the lived  
5 experiences and culture. It also makes school feel  
6 more enjoyable and enables the students to be more  
7 engaged. It honestly feels like the lesson is worth  
8 learning. As a current student, sometimes I even  
9 find myself asking my teachers, "How is this relative  
10 to me? How is it relevant to me, and when will I  
11 ever need to use this?" The answer I typically get  
12 is we need this to graduate. For some students who  
13 have difficulties learning and staying engaged, the  
14 answer is not enough to make them attend school.  
15 I've seen peers of mine drop out and explain that  
16 it's because school wasn't for them. I know from my  
17 research that this happens at a systemic level and  
18 that these are not just isolated incidents. I know  
19 that learning standards that are disrespectful of  
20 students or not relevant to their lives contributes  
21 to school push-outs and the school to prison pipeline  
22 in New York. Our current educational system expects  
23 us to excel in an area that has no meaning to us,  
24 even though research has proven that you learn best  
25 when a subject interests you, and even can improve

1  
2 the academic performance of students who have  
3 learning disabilities. With more attention paid to  
4 culturally relevant learning standards and the  
5 creation of this taskforce, we have the opportunity  
6 to make all students feel like they belong in school  
7 and help them thrive in areas that before could have  
8 led them to being pushed out. Thank you again for  
9 this opportunity to speak today.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Jaleel, what type of  
11 lessons would you like to see taught? What would you  
12 like to see more talk about?

13 JALEEL FRANCIS: Just, like, for me being  
14 black and Latino more things like black and Latino  
15 that interest me, and like in particular.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, do like current  
17 event issues interest you?

18 JALEEL FRANCIS: Yes, current.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Do things like Black  
20 Lives Matter interest you?

21 JALEEL FRANCIS: Yes.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Have you ever had a  
23 discussion on that in your school?

24 JALEEL FRANCIS: No.  
25

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: No. Have you ever  
3 had a discussion on the effects of mass incarceration  
4 on black and Latino youth?

5 JALEEL FRANCIS: No. Sometimes like in  
6 my school they-- like, history, they tie it back to  
7 slavery, and today make that connection. So, it  
8 happens, but not as much as I think it should.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: But that's interesting  
10 that that's the only thing that they're talking  
11 about, because I think that one of the things that  
12 we'd like to see happen is that they-- yeah, okay,  
13 that is a part of African-American history in this  
14 country, but often times that's the only thing that  
15 we get to, and that leaves a wrong impression on  
16 students, that that's the whole black experience, you  
17 know? Do they ever talk about the Civil Rights  
18 movement, Martin Luther King, and those types of  
19 things?

20 JALEEL FRANCIS: Yeah, only in history,  
21 though.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Only in history?

23 JALEEL FRANCIS: Yeah, for a very short  
24 time.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I mean, I think, you  
3 know, there's a way to integrate this stuff into the  
4 curriculum, and I think you're absolutely right that  
5 if we did I think students would be much more engaged  
6 and want to come to school. So, thank you. Thank  
7 you for sticking around and for giving your  
8 testimony, too. Appreciate it. Katherine?

9 KATHERINE CHAMBERS: Hi, so my name is  
10 Katherine Chambers. I'm a Bengali Muslim trans  
11 woman, and I currently work at--

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing]  
13 Katherine, is the mic on?

14 KATHERINE CHAMBERS: It is. That's  
15 better?

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah.

17 KATHERINE CHAMBERS: Okay. So, my name is  
18 Katherine Chambers. I'm a Bengali Muslim trans  
19 woman, and I'm here because mostly because I get a  
20 ton of emails from you, and I'm just like, "Oh, this  
21 is something I'm interested in."

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Katherine, I don't  
23 set these things up.

24 KATHERINE CHAMBERS: But I wanted--  
25

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] But I do  
3 think you have an important story and a good  
4 perspective--

5 KATHERINE CHAMBERS: Yeah.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: and that's why we  
7 wanted to hear from you.

8 KATHERINE CHAMBERS: And I really wanted  
9 to speak more on Resolution 1415, especially because  
10 I-- when I went to high school I did not hear  
11 anything about lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans people,  
12 and I did not know LGBT people outside of what we  
13 talked about earlier was the insult "that's so gay"  
14 existed. LGBTQIA people didn't really exist up until  
15 after college for me. And for me being someone  
16 growing up and not feeling right in the gender I was  
17 assigned at birth and it was just like okay, you  
18 know, I kind of sort of understand what lesbian and  
19 gay is, but then now where the hell do I fit in  
20 because I feel like a woman, but that doesn't relate  
21 to anything about being attracted to this person or  
22 that person. So, throughout my journey it's been a  
23 hell of a journey, but after high school I started  
24 coming to work at Project Reach and at Project Reach  
25 for both the youth and adult-run organization. And



1  
2 we've been lately working with tons and tons of  
3 schools and in all of our workshops we infuse things  
4 like history of how essentially this country would  
5 not exist without labor from people of color, both  
6 black, Latino, Asian, Chinese, you know, pretty much  
7 everyone, and how that's completely missing as well  
8 as the fact that young people in history are  
9 completely missing, and I haven't even heard it  
10 spoken once in this discussion. And we've been  
11 working with schools in Brownsville and Bronx and  
12 literally all over the City working to infuse our  
13 curriculum into their curriculum next year, and you  
14 know, as someone who's new to this work I see young  
15 people get-- young people who would never speak get  
16 so energized and so happy that they're finally--  
17 people like them are finally being spoken, but these  
18 are only during workshop hours when we come in. and  
19 then after that, they're just like, "I don't know  
20 what to do. Can we come to your Center?" And you  
21 know, they're welcome to our center, but it's just  
22 like once they walk out of our center, what do we do  
23 then, which is why I really want to support this  
24 resolution in expanding the curriculum and including  
25 people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, people

1  
2 of color, people who are gender non-conforming, and  
3 young people which I didn't see written on it, but I  
4 want young people in history be spoken about as well.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. And just  
6 as an observation, I assume or I think I saw a number  
7 of people come in today who spoke about the  
8 importance of LGBTQI and A in lessons on sexuality,  
9 but of course the whole curriculum, but I was very  
10 pleased to see like a number of non-LGBTQIA people  
11 speaking on the subject as well because I think it's  
12 really important, and I think it's of interest to  
13 people as well. I think it's just as engaging as  
14 having the discussion about Black Lives Matter and  
15 the intersection of all that and how everybody's  
16 affected by institutionalized racism, homophobia,  
17 etcetera, so forth and so on. I mean, those are the  
18 things I would be interested in, you know, if I was  
19 to go back to high school. So, anyway, thank you for  
20 coming in and for giving testimony, and thank you for  
21 heading my emails. Okay, next?

22 DEBORAH LEVINE: Good afternoon. My name  
23 is Deborah Levine and I'm LCSW and I'm the Deputy  
24 Executive Director for Community Development of  
25 ACRIA. Thank you for convening this meeting, and I

1  
2 will adieu with addressing the panel since that has  
3 been done before me. What I will tell you is that  
4 ACRIA and its Love Heals Youth Programming are  
5 members of SEACUS [sic] and we're proud members. So  
6 we support all of the recommendations. We support  
7 the fact that a taskforce is necessary along with the  
8 rest. I will say to you that having sat here all  
9 afternoon and listened, I support all of the  
10 recommendations that were given to this panel, and  
11 having done this work for over 30 years and working  
12 with young people who identify across the entire  
13 spectrum, the one thing that I can tell you is is  
14 that just giving a teacher an hour and a half  
15 training on human sexuality is not enough. If we  
16 really want to being to address the stigmas, if we  
17 really want to be able to give our young people  
18 information that is important that is going to keep  
19 them healthy, that is going to keep them happy, that  
20 is going to make them productive individuals in the  
21 community, then we have to be able to provide them  
22 with trainers who are culturally competent,  
23 linguistically sensitive, who understand that there  
24 is a spectrum by which people live. And so that is  
25 inclusive of both heterosexual, non-identifying,

1 identifying, whatever letters of the alphabet you  
2 want to include, but we have to be respectful of the  
3 fact that those young people, our young people, need  
4 people that are going to be able to give them  
5 science-based information that is supportive and  
6 inclusive of them. That people that are not afraid  
7 to talk about sex and pleasure and say that in the  
8 same breath and not clutch pearls at the same time,  
9 and make young people feel bad because they have a  
10 question about their sexuality or their uncle's or  
11 their aunt's or the person sitting next to them. So,  
12 if we really want to begin to address the stigma, if  
13 we really want to be able to give our young people  
14 the things that they most need, this taskforce is an  
15 excellent opportunity to be able to being to do that.  
16 The fact that we can't tell when we're giving these  
17 classes is appalling in 2017, and I'm sorry to say  
18 that. I'm grateful to live in a state that we have  
19 these regulations, but I also know that we have a  
20 long way to go in this process. So, please know that  
21 ACRIA is here to support, to work in any way possible  
22 with the Council and with anyone else who is willing  
23 to ensure that the youth that we serve over the 700  
24

1  
2 schools through the five boroughs that we are present  
3 in, that we are there to provide that support.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Deborah,  
5 and I agree with you. I think one of the things  
6 that, you know, I asked the other panel like, "What  
7 would you want? What you want? What would you want  
8 as an outcome." I don't know if you were here when I  
9 did that, but for me the number one thing would be  
10 accountability because when teachers know that they're  
11 going to be measured on principals know that they're  
12 going to be held accountable for actually making sure  
13 that these classes occur, then I think you're going  
14 to see the change. So, you know, and then they'll  
15 reach out and want to do it, and putting it on an  
16 evaluation or on a report card specifically sex  
17 education rather than just health education might be  
18 another way to hold folks accountable. Because I can  
19 remember going to my principal and saying, if I'm not  
20 mistaken, "Health education, who's supposed to be  
21 teaching that?" The first year or two because I had  
22 no idea that we were supposed to be doing it, you  
23 know. But it would be a way to hold people  
24 accountable. So, thank you.

25 DEBORAH LEVINE: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Next, please.

JACQUELINE MATUSA: Good afternoon. My name is Jacqueline Matusa [sp?]. I'm a member of SEANYC, the Sex Ed. Alliance of New York City. Thank you, Chair Dromm, for convening this hearing. Thank you also to the Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito and all the Council Members who signed onto Intro 1028-A and Resolution 1415. I'll try not to repeat things that other colleagues have shared. As a professional I provided and overseen sexuality education programs in New York City public schools and I've provided services to students through the High School Resource Room as well. I've heard stories from the young people who come to visit afterwards to share how helpful the program's been, and because I've seen the benefits firsthand, I support comprehensive sexual education for New York City schools. As we-- other people have mentioned, too many of our students are not even receiving sort of the bare recommendations in New York City, and we really need to do better by our young people. so, I commend the Speaker and the Council on this legislation, and I strongly support the creation of the taskforce to provide recommendations for improving sexual health

1 education, but it's also imperative that the  
2 Administration take immediate steps to implement age-  
3 appropriate sex ed. in all middle and high school and  
4 expand to all grades, kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup>,  
5 because we know that we can best help young people to  
6 make good decisions about their reproductive health  
7 before they're sexually active. When I worked with  
8 students, my staff and I routinely heard comments  
9 from them when we were in high schools like, "I wish  
10 we had this three years ago." As someone who's spent  
11 a career developing my skills as a sexual health  
12 educator and trainer, I also want to note what others  
13 had mentioned earlier, how important it is to have  
14 the right people in place to do these programs and as  
15 well as staffing in the Condom Availability Program  
16 and the Resource Rooms. Many students have told me  
17 before that they choose just to not utilize the  
18 resource room in their school because the teacher  
19 that was either judgmental-- I've heard stories of  
20 teachers who refuse to give condoms to students they  
21 felt didn't need them, didn't have-- weren't able to  
22 answer any questions about how they could access  
23 health resources. So, to other people's points  
24 earlier, it'd be great if people who are  
25

1  
2 professionals in this area and have this experience  
3 could be doing more of this work, and also to make  
4 sure that when we're having people from-- who are  
5 teachers and DOE would make sure they're really  
6 trained and that they're receiving continuing sort of  
7 professional development in this area. As you noted  
8 earlier, only 7.6 percent of those had received a  
9 sexual health screening in the last two years. So, I  
10 look forward to the taskforce prioritizing  
11 appropriate training and professional development.  
12 And then I also want to support the Council  
13 Resolution 1415 which calls upon the New York State  
14 Department of Education to convene a taskforce to  
15 assess the cultural relevance of state learning  
16 standards across subject areas, because for young  
17 people to learn and thrive, we really need to have an  
18 educational system that supports their many  
19 identities. So, I'm proud to support the proposed  
20 legislation, and I respectfully request the Council's  
21 quick passage of Intro 1028-A, and thanks for the  
22 opportunity to testify today.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Would you know if on  
24 the elementary level in the sex education courses, is  
25 it taught how animals have babies?



1  
2 JACQUELINE MATUSA: It probably depends on  
3 the curriculum. I don't think that's usually a focus.  
4 The focus is usually more on particularly for  
5 elementary schools is a focus on understanding your  
6 body and sort of relationships and more broad things  
7 I think like that. I've never seen it, but that  
8 doesn't mean it doesn't exist.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: It just hits me  
10 because you know, this whole thing with April the  
11 Giraffe was on Facebook. Am I right?

12 JACQUELINE MATUSA: Yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And there were very  
14 clear, vivid shots of the baby coming out, and I'm  
15 sure kids in elementary school have seen this. Now,  
16 if you live on a farm, you see the animals, you know,  
17 giving birth to, you know, to babies all the time and  
18 it's nothing, you know, to even concern you. but you  
19 know, I think it-- I think in some ways some people  
20 might have objections if were to address that issue  
21 in school, but it's so ridiculous, you know, because  
22 it's just such a natural part of life, and I guess it  
23 depends an awful lot on the culture and the  
24 environment that you live in, but anyway. We have a  
25 long way to go in terms of sexuality education, sex

1  
2 education in the schools and culturally responsive  
3 education. So, I think this was a very good hearing  
4 and I want to thank all of you for coming and  
5 sticking around and being here to the very end as  
6 well, and with that we will adjourn at 5:16 in the  
7 afternoon. Thank you.

8 [gavel]

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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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 May 15, 2017