

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

----- X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

----- X

December 11, 2014  
Start: 10:25 a.m.  
Recess: 7:45 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  
Mark S. Weprin  
Jumaane D. Williams  
Andy L. King  
Inez D. Barron  
Chaim M. Deutsch  
Mark Levine  
Alan N. Maisel  
Antonio Reynoso  
Mark Treyger

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

Ursulina Ramirez  
Chief of Staff to Chancellor Farina of the  
Department of Education

Ainsley Rudolfo  
Executive Director of Programs and Partnerships  
at DOE Office of Equity and Access

Robert Sanft  
Chief Executive Director of DOE Office of  
Student Enrollment

Toby Ann Stavisky  
New York State Senator 16<sup>th</sup> District

Jeffery Dinowitz  
Assemblyman

William Colton  
Assemblyman

Nancy Tong  
Committee Woman

Janella Hinds  
United Federation of Teachers

Esmeralda Simmons  
Center for Law and Social Justice

Jose Perez  
Latino Justice PRLDEF

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

Lazar Treschan  
Community Service Society of New York

Rachel Kleinman  
NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund

Yasmin Secada  
Parent Leadership Project

Lisa Donlan  
CEC 1

David Goldsmith  
CEC 13

Ujju Aggarwal  
Parent Leadership Project

Larry Cary  
Brooklyn Tech Alumni Coalition

Horace Davis  
Brooklyn Tech Alumni Foundation

Alyssa Stein  
Brooklyn Tech PTA President

Mark Williams  
Brooklyn Tech

Dishan Gondol  
Brooklyn Tech High School Senior

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

David Bloomfield  
Brooklyn College

David Tipson  
Appleseed New York

Linda Tropp  
University of Massachusetts Amherst President

Michael Alves  
Massachusetts DOE

Carole Brown  
Stuyvesant Black Alumni Diversity Initiative

Tanya Messado  
Stuyvesant Black Alumni Diversity Initiative

Kimberly Williams  
Stuyvesant Black Alumni Diversity Initiative

Heidi Reisch  
Stuyvesant Black Alumni Diversity Initiative

Triana D'Orazio  
Committee for Hispanic Children

Randi Levine  
Advocates for Children

Mitchel Wu  
Coalition for Asian-American Children and  
Families

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

Jane Lee Delgado  
NYC Public

Liz Rosenberg  
NYC Public

Halley Potter  
Century Foundation

Dan Rubenstein  
Brooklyn Prospect Charter School

Miriam Nunberg  
Brooklyn Urban Gardens Charter School

Eric Joeress  
NYC Charter Center

Ayana Bahine  
Families at Arts and Letters K-8

Sarah Camiscoli  
Families at Arts and Letters K-8

Timothy Martinez  
Families at Arts and Letters K-8

Julissa Cruz  
Integrate NYC for Me

Samantha Ramos  
Integrate NYC for Me

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

Michael Mascetti  
Science Schools Initiative

Carlos Guzman  
Science Schools Initiative

Valerie Boss  
Science Schools Initiative

Tendaye Watkins  
Science Schools Initiative

Glyn Caddell  
Staten Island Technical High School Alumni  
Association

Steve Chung  
United Chinese Association of Brooklyn Embrace

Michael Hilton  
Poverty and Race Research/National Coalition on  
School Diversity

Kamala Carmen  
NYC Public

Jimmy Li  
Brooklyn Asian Community Empowerment

Jim DeVore  
Past President of Community Education Council  
for District 15

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

Sue Schneider  
Former Director of Remedial Reading School for  
Adults with Disabilities

Elizabeth Eilaender  
Stuyvesant

Pamela Skinner  
Blacks and Browns of the Big Three

Christina Alfonso  
Stuyvesant High School Alumni Association

Romeo Alexander  
Stuyvesant Alum

Soo Kim  
Stuyvesant High School Alumni Association

Keiran Carpen  
Stuyvesant Student Union President

Wai Wah Chin  
Stuyvesant School Leadership team

Stanley Blumenstien  
Past Assistant Principal at Bronx Science

Doctor Ivan Kahn  
CEO Kahn's Tutorial

Santiago Munoz  
Bronx Science Student

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

Johnathan Roberts  
Vice Chair of Bronx Science Alumni Association

Vincent Galasso  
Past Bronx Science Principal

Michael Weiss

David Lee  
Director of Coalition EDU

Jennifer Krueger  
Public school parent

Faye Moore  
Bronx Science Graduate

Ray Feige  
Brooklyn Tech Alum

Heady Chappelle

Charles Varishka

Dennis Saffran  
Lawyer

Phil Gimm  
Coalition EDU

Ying He Chin Lee  
Stuyvesant Student



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

Michael Benjamin

David Garcia Rosen  
DOE Former Director of Small Schools Athletic  
League

Ron Cau  
Representing Sonja Pablovich

Adam Feilich  
Bronx Science Alum

Karen Barbinell  
Teacher at PS 304

Robert Gezelter  
Bronx Science Alum

Laura Hamilton

Ara Arem  
Alum of Lehman College

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Good morning and  
3 welcome to the Education Committee's Oversight  
4 hearing on diversity in New York City Schools. My  
5 name is Daniel Dromm and I'm the Chair of the  
6 Education Committee, and I'm joined by my colleagues  
7 Council Member Andy King from the Bronx, Council  
8 Member Mark Weprin from Queens, and other members  
9 will be joining us shortly. Today we'll also hear  
10 testimony on a bill and two resolutions, Proposed  
11 Intro 511A sponsored by Council Member Brad Lander,  
12 and Resolution 453 Ritchie Torres and Resolution 442  
13 sponsored by Council Member Inez Barron. I'll talk  
14 more about these items shortly after some opening  
15 remarks, and then we'll move on to hear statements  
16 from the lead sponsors of the legislation we're  
17 considering today. We're fortunate to live in one of  
18 the world's most diverse cities, but our schools are  
19 some of the most segregated in the country. Most New  
20 Yorkers value diversity and would probably be shocked  
21 to learn that approximately half of the city's  
22 schools have a concentration of at least 90 percent  
23 black and Hispanic students, and with less than 10  
24 percent white enrollment are considered intensely  
25 segregated. In fact, the lack of diversity in city

1 schools has contributed to New York State being  
2 judged to have the most segregated schools in the  
3 nation according to a 2014 report by the Civil  
4 Rights Project at UCLA. The overall population of  
5 students in city schools is very diverse, 40 percent  
6 of our students are Hispanic, 28 percent are black,  
7 15 percent are Asian, and just under 15 percent are  
8 white. However, that same diversity is rarely  
9 reflected in individual schools. So, why should we  
10 care whether all our schools are diverse or not?  
11 Because racial and economic integration of schools is  
12 one of the few education reforms that has proven to  
13 increase the educational achievement and  
14 opportunities of minority and low income children.  
15 Not surprisingly, the best way to ensure that  
16 educational resource are equitably distributed among  
17 all children is to allow all children access to the  
18 same schools. Research shows that black and Hispanic  
19 students integrated schools perform better on tests,  
20 have higher graduation rates, better life  
21 opportunities, and higher income as adults. Further,  
22 many studies show benefits for students of all races  
23 and ethnicities attending diverse schools.  
24 Interaction with classmates of different backgrounds  
25

1 and perspectives enhances complex thinking in all  
2 students. Diversity in the classroom also improves  
3 cross-racial understanding and reduces racial  
4 prejudice, increases civic engagement, produces  
5 greater sensitivity, and a greater desire to live and  
6 work in multiracial settings. In addition, diverse  
7 schools are linked to a host of positive learning  
8 outcomes for white students, including the promotion  
9 of critical thinking and problem solving skills and  
10 higher academic achievement. Attending diverse  
11 schools can also provide social advantages for white  
12 students, such as more friendship across racial  
13 lines, less stereotyping and higher levels of  
14 cultural competence. Cultural competency refers to  
15 the ability to effectively work with and relate to  
16 others across racial and ethnic lines and offers a  
17 critical advantage in a democratic society in the  
18 multi-racial workplace of the future. The bottom line  
19 is, diversity is essential for high quality schools  
20 and effective education. And I want to make it clear  
21 that when I talk about diversity I mean all forms of  
22 diversity, race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic  
23 status, language, disability, sexual orientation and  
24 gender identity, housing status and so on. Clearly,  
25

1 this is an important topic and we have a lot to  
2 examine today regarding diversity in the New York  
3 City public schools. The committee also looks  
4 forward to hearing testimony from parents, students,  
5 educators, advocates, unions, CEC members and others  
6 on this issue. As I stated earlier, we will also  
7 hear testimony on proposed Intro 511A, Resolution 553  
8 and Resolution 442 today. Proposed Intro 511A would  
9 require the Department of Education to submit to the  
10 Council and post on the DOE's website an annual  
11 report by October 31<sup>st</sup> with data on the current  
12 composition of the student body in each school and  
13 district including the data for charter schools and  
14 special programs. This bill would also require the  
15 DOE to report on progress and efforts toward  
16 increasing diversity within schools. Resolution 453  
17 calls on the New York City Department of Education to  
18 officially recognize the importance and benefits of  
19 school diversity and to set it as a priority when  
20 making decisions regarding admissions policies,  
21 creation of new schools, school rezoning and other  
22 decisions. Resolution 453 also calls on the DOE to  
23 commit to having a strategy in each district for  
24 overcoming impediments to school diversity.  
25

1  
2 Resolution 442 calls on the New York State  
3 legislature to pass and the Governor to sign S.7738  
4 and Assembly 9979 to change the admissions criteria  
5 for New York City's specialized high schools. Before  
6 I call on my colleagues to make their statements,  
7 there's a few things I need to clear up. There has  
8 been a lot of media attention to Resolution 442 and  
9 proposed changes in the specialized high school  
10 admissions. Unfortunately, a lot of misinformation  
11 has also been spread, and we're getting emails and  
12 petitions from people that is based on this  
13 misinformation. This legislation would establish  
14 multiple measures of student merit to be used in  
15 addition to the test to determine admissions to the  
16 specialized high schools. Specifically, these  
17 measures of student merit would include a student's  
18 grade point average, state test scores and attendance  
19 records, except that approved schools absences not be  
20 included as part of this analysis. The legislation  
21 also requires the Chancellor to make a written  
22 explanation of the weights given to different factors  
23 publicly available and to conspicuously post notice  
24 of the specialized high school entrance examination.  
25 It's important to note that there is broad consensus

1 among the leading organizations in the area of  
2 educational test measurement that high stake test  
3 decisions with a major impact on a student's  
4 educational opportunities such as admission to the  
5 specialized program should not be based on the  
6 results of a single test. Instead, multiple measures  
7 are needed for high stakes decisions. In recognition  
8 of that, schools throughout the country have moved to  
9 multiple measures for their admission process,  
10 leaving New York City as the only place that still  
11 relies on a single test admission for specialized  
12 high school. I've heard many people express the view  
13 that a student is much more than a single test score,  
14 and I agree. Basing the entire judgment of a student  
15 on a single test score from a single day is not an  
16 exact science. There's some subjectivity even in a  
17 test, as is the case with students with the resources  
18 to purchase extensive test preparation services.  
19 They certainly have an advantage over other students  
20 without such resources and preparation. Some critics  
21 maintain that admission test scores may not always be  
22 based solely on merit, as some test prep companies  
23 teach students tricks to game the test. All the more  
24 reason why additional measures should be used. If  
25

1 there is wide disagreement with the additional  
2 measures that are proposed in the State Legislation,  
3 then there should be further discussion to determine  
4 what the best measures would be. Hopefully, we can  
5 have some of that dialogue here today. We've also  
6 heard from some organizations who believe that the  
7 proposed changes in admission process will not lead  
8 to the desired student diversity, so they propose  
9 other strategies, such as improving the quality of  
10 middle schools and providing additional test prep  
11 services for disadvantages students among others. I  
12 certainly agree that these and other steps will be  
13 needed to achieve high levels of student diversity in  
14 schools throughout the city, as well in the  
15 specialized high schools. We hope to hear more such  
16 ideas and successful practices today. I would like  
17 to remind everyone who wishes to testify that you  
18 must fill out a witness slip, which is located over  
19 here on the desk of the Sergeant at Arms near the  
20 front of the room. If you wish to testify on  
21 proposed Intro 511A, Reso 453 or Reso 442, please  
22 indicate on the witness slip whether you are here to  
23 testify in favor or in opposition to the bill or the  
24 resolution. I also want to point out that we will  
25



1  
2 not be voting on the bill or the resolutions today as  
3 this is just the first hearing. To allow as many  
4 people as possible to testify, testimony will be  
5 strictly limited to three minutes per person, and I  
6 must stick by that. We do have an awful lot of slips  
7 that have been turned in today. Now, I'd like to  
8 turn the floor over to my colleagues, Brad Lander, to  
9 my colleague Brad Lander for his remarks regarding  
10 proposed Intro 511A. Council Member?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you very  
12 much, Chair Dromm, and thanks especially for  
13 convening this important hearing. I know you've got a  
14 long docket and getting this hearing in this year in  
15 the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of Brown versus Board of  
16 Education, I think is very important and a signal of  
17 your leadership. And I want to thank the Department  
18 of Education for being here and for having done a lot  
19 of work, you know, in dialogue with the Council in  
20 starting to think about this and how we can move  
21 forward. As you so eloquently stated, and as I think  
22 we'll hear throughout the day, the challenges of  
23 segregation and the opportunities of diversity in our  
24 schools are critical, fundamental moral issues. The  
25 fact that 60 years after Brown V. Board, New York has

1  
2 the most segregated schools in the country, and in  
3 some places we're moving backwards are a fundamental,  
4 moral problem for the city that we absolutely have to  
5 face up to, and the urgency at this moment especially  
6 in what we're seeing in the streets and throughout  
7 the city of what it means if we fail to create and  
8 build a city of diverse students and diverse  
9 leadership is a powerful issue, and you know, we know  
10 and the evidence says and you cited it and we'll hear  
11 it as well, diversity is better for all students.  
12 It's not simply an issue that's separate but equal,  
13 it is inherently unequal. It is that the kids we  
14 want for the future, the kids I want for the future,  
15 the kids we need to provide leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup>  
16 century and the education they get, it matters if we  
17 can create diverse schools. So, I really want to  
18 thank you for convening the hearing at all. It is  
19 obviously not a simple problem to solve. We've got a  
20 heavily residentially segregated city and certainly  
21 at the elementary school level. That's one of, not  
22 the only, but a core driver of school segregation,  
23 and thinking about the things that we can do to  
24 confront that problem at the elementary, the middle  
25 and the high school level; admissions itself is an

1 inherently complex process as we'll hear, and surely  
2 complex in a system with 1,700 schools and a million  
3 kids. So there is not a simple, single bullet  
4 answer, but that cannot be a reason why we don't step  
5 up to the plate and think about the ways to move  
6 forward, because there are solutions, some  
7 legislative and some on the ground. We've got three  
8 legislative solutions before us today. I'm proud to  
9 be the lead sponsor of one, but I actually want to  
10 start very briefly with the one that is sponsored by  
11 Council Member Ritchie Torres, a resolution asking  
12 DOE simply, but importantly to establish diversity as  
13 a core policy goal in admissions and other realms  
14 when decision making is taking place. That may seem  
15 subtle or obvious, but if we don't have it as a core  
16 goal, then it can't get built into admissions and  
17 other critical decision making. So, a very important  
18 resolution. Then my piece of legislation, Intro  
19 511A, would require the tracking of year by year  
20 progress toward that goal and give us the additional  
21 data needed to really see what's going on better at  
22 the school, the district and the citywide level. And  
23 then, as you mentioned, there is Council Member  
24 Barron's resolution on the specialized high schools.  
25

1  
2 Obviously, as you can tell from outside the most in  
3 some ways contentious issue of today's hearing. But  
4 in addition to the things you said, I also want to  
5 flag that that covers by State Law Three and by  
6 additional city policy, a total of nine of our 1,700  
7 schools. Important issue, important leaders,  
8 important schools to be sure, but either three or  
9 nine of 1,700, and I hope today's hearing will hold  
10 the breath that diversity is a critical and relevant  
11 issues across all 1,700 schools, and I hope members  
12 of the media who I know will be here as well as of  
13 all us, you know, work on that issue. It is  
14 important, but also keep it in that broader context.  
15 And then finally, I want to note that there are  
16 things that can be done by legislation, and I'm happy  
17 we're considering them, but there are many things  
18 that have to be done on the ground in different ways,  
19 both through DOE policy and practice, but there is so  
20 much leadership being provided in the schools and  
21 districts across the city already by educators, by  
22 parent advocates, by students themselves, but  
23 principals and superintendents and CEC's, and many of  
24 them are here and we'll hear from some of them. If we  
25 can come out of this hearing not only raising the

1  
2 profile, the issue moving forward on the legislation,  
3 but strengthening and building the community of  
4 practice together of people that are working toward  
5 confronting, moving toward ending segregation and  
6 promoting more diverse schools, that will really be a  
7 great achievement if we can empower those districts  
8 and those schools and those educators that are taking  
9 us in that direction. That will be a great step  
10 forward. So again, Chair Dromm, I want to thank you,  
11 and I also want to thank your--the great staff, Jan  
12 Atwell, Joan Pabloni [sp?] and Asia Schamberg [sp?]  
13 for their work as well as my policy director, Ben  
14 Smith, who've done a lot of work in advancing this  
15 hearing. Thank you very much.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. And I  
17 also want to thank Asia Schamberg, Jan Atwell, Joan  
18 Pabloni, Medina Netzamitindine [sp?], and Norah Yaya  
19 [sp?] for all the work that they have done on this  
20 committee. And I would like to say that we have been  
21 joined by Council Member Andy King from the Bronx,  
22 Council Member Inez Barron from Brooklyn, Council  
23 Member Mark Treyger from Brooklyn, Council Member  
24 Alan Maisel from Brooklyn, and Council Member Chaim  
25 Deutsch from Brooklyn, who is also the Chair of the

1  
2 Committee on Nonpublic Schools. So thank you all for  
3 being here. And now, I'd like to give Council Member  
4 Barron the opportunity--Oh, I'm sorry. I'm sorry I  
5 said that. Council Member Andy King is who I meant  
6 to say. We are lucky we have two Andy's on the panel  
7 today with us. Thank you. Council Member Barron,  
8 please.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you, Mr.  
10 Chair. I'm glad that we're having this hearing  
11 today. It's very important, all of the issues that  
12 we'll be addressing. I'm glad to see that the panel  
13 is in place to present a response to the topic that  
14 we're going to be talking about. The resolution that  
15 I've introduced talks about not using a specialized  
16 test as the sole criteria for admission to the  
17 special high schools. Historically, we know that  
18 standardized tests have not favored those who are not  
19 in the mainstream, either in terms of race, ethnicity  
20 or class. We've known that these tests have been  
21 biased against blacks and Latinos and there's not any  
22 criteria or any explanation from the testing  
23 authority, which validates this test as being an  
24 indicator of success or admission for the high  
25 school. So we're looking to see what other measures

1 will be included as we select the students, and we're  
2 looking also to make sure that there is a discovery  
3 program that's implemented in the Bronx high school  
4 science [sic] as well as Stuyvesant, which will allow  
5 for students who are just below the cut off to be  
6 placed in a summer program so that they can take  
7 advantage of this. Yesterday was Human Rights Day.  
8 I'm sure we're all aware of that, and one of the  
9 article talks about the equity and the responsibility  
10 of free education for all of the persons in a  
11 society. So we're looking to make sure that there's  
12 the equity of admission to blacks and Latinos so that  
13 they would also be able to benefit from admission to  
14 the specialized schools. We also heard testimony  
15 yesterday at a hearing on College Discovery and Seek.  
16 Those are programs that began 50 and 48 years ago as  
17 a response to the fact that blacks, Latinos and  
18 anyone who was not European, in fact, and wealthy was  
19 not given an equitable opportunity to attend and to  
20 participate in schools across the nation. And we had  
21 testimony from several persons who had been admitted  
22 to colleges and participated through the College  
23 Discovery Program. One young man talked about the  
24 fact that he barely got out of high school. He came  
25

1  
2 out of high school with a 60 average, but through  
3 College Discovery and through the support that he  
4 gained through the counseling, the orientation, the  
5 mentoring, the peer tutoring, and the general  
6 financial support as well they got, he is now  
7 graduating. He's an intern at one of the Wall Street  
8 firms and math is his major subject. He did well in  
9 Calculus One and Two. He was denied the opportunity  
10 to have the instruction that would have given him the  
11 ability to show what his competencies are. So we're  
12 looking to move forward to bring equity to blacks and  
13 Latinos in particular so that they will be able to be  
14 represented. There's been a serious decline in the  
15 numbers of black and Latino students at the  
16 specialized high schools as well as the client in the  
17 black faculty, which we'll talk about I'm sure at  
18 another time, throughout the city. So I'm glad that  
19 we're having this hearing today and look forward to  
20 the panel's presentations. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And both my sons  
23 went to Brooklyn Tech.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Proud mom. We've  
25 also been joined by Council Member Margaret Chin from



1  
2 Manhattan, Council Member Mark Levine also from  
3 Manhattan. I think that's everybody now. So, I'd  
4 like to swear the members of the Department of  
5 Education who are with us here today. That is  
6 Ursulina Ramirez, Bob Sanft and Ainsley Rodolfo. And  
7 if you'd just raise your right hand, please? Do you  
8 solemnly swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole  
9 truth and nothing but the truth, and to answer  
10 Council Member questions honestly? Thank you. And  
11 Mr. Ramirez, would you like to begin?

12                   URSULINA RAMIREZ: Good morning, Chairman  
13 Dromm and all the members of the Education Committee  
14 here today. My name is Ursulina Ramirez, and I'm  
15 the Chief of Staff to Chancellor Carmen Farina at the  
16 New York City Department of Education. I'm joined by  
17 my colleagues Robert Sanft, the Chief Executive  
18 Officer of the DOE's Office of Student Enrollment and  
19 Ainsley Rudolfo, Executive Director of Programs and  
20 Partnerships at the DOE's Office of Equity and  
21 Access. Thank you for the opportunity to testify  
22 before you today regarding diversity in New York City  
23 schools and proposed Intro Number 511A. At the  
24 outset, I would like to commend the Council for  
25 bringing attention to this important and complex

1  
2 issue. As we commemorate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of  
3 Brown versus the Board of Education, it is important  
4 to both recognize the progress we have made towards  
5 creating more equity in the public school system and  
6 acknowledge that more work needs to be done to  
7 achieve greater diversity in our schools. As a  
8 recent report by the Civil Rights Project University  
9 of California notes, far too many of our students  
10 attend schools that lack racial diversity. It is  
11 widely recognized that diverse learning environments  
12 benefit students of all academic, racial and  
13 socioeconomic backgrounds. Today, I want to share  
14 with you some of the steps we have taken to increase  
15 diversity across the system, the challenges we face  
16 and what more we can do to address school diversity.  
17 We also recognize this challenge is not unique to New  
18 York City public schools, but a challenge faced by  
19 school districts across the country. Our student  
20 body is reflective of New York City's rich cultural,  
21 linguistic, racial, and ethnic diversity. Our  
22 students collectively represent over 100  
23 nationalities, 190 nationalities and speak more than  
24 160 languages, with 13 percent being English language  
25 learners. The racial and ethnic composition of our

1 student body is approximately 40 percent Latino, 28  
2 percent African-American, 15 percent Asian, 14  
3 percent white. Furthermore, when we consider  
4 socioeconomic status, almost 80 percent of our  
5 students are eligible for free or reduced price  
6 lunch. Across the system there are what we consider  
7 to be racially isolated schools, where at least 75  
8 percent of the student body represents one ethnicity,  
9 and we see increased levels of racial isolation at  
10 the elementary school level when compared to other  
11 grade bands. One factor that contextualizes this  
12 reality is that many families choose to send their  
13 children to their zoned elementary school, preferring  
14 to have young children attend a neighborhood school  
15 located close to their home. As a result, the  
16 demographics of most elementary schools reflect the  
17 ethnicity of the communities they serve. Any effort  
18 to increase school diversity, particularly at the  
19 elementary school level is somewhat limited by the  
20 strong correlation between neighborhood demographics  
21 and school demographics. Increasingly, the city's  
22 housing patterns and widening income inequality have  
23 led to racially and socioeconomically stratified  
24 neighborhoods, which in some cases has significantly  
25

1 contributed to a lack of racial and ethnic  
2 socioeconomic diversity in our schools. For example,  
3 in six of our 32 community school districts, students  
4 from one race comprise 75 percent or more of the  
5 student population. This includes District Six in  
6 Manhattan and District 16, 17, 18, 23, and 32 in  
7 Brooklyn. This school data, mere census data.  
8 District 18, for example, which primarily serves the  
9 neighborhood of Canarsie, is over 80 percent African-  
10 American. At the same time, many of our schools have  
11 a diverse mix of students of different races and  
12 ethnicities. There are 12 school districts where no  
13 single race or ethnicity constitutes more than 50  
14 percent of the student body. These districts are  
15 located in Manhattan, Brooklyn, the Bronx and Queens.  
16 While most elementary and many middle school students  
17 attend their zoned schools, families in every  
18 district also have other options. They may choose  
19 among non-zoned district or citywide schools and/or  
20 charter schools. At every level, we have increased  
21 the number of high quality school options available  
22 to families. We support the efforts of school  
23 communities to implement new methods for promoting  
24 diversity within their schools. Most recently, we  
25

1 worked with the CEC's in District 13 and 15 in  
2 Brooklyn on PS 133, a new nonzoned school that has  
3 both Spanish and French dual language programs. As a  
4 result of discussion with the CEC's and with support  
5 from local elected officials, including Council  
6 Members Lander and Levin, a unique admission priority  
7 structure was created to help promote racial, ethnic,  
8 and socioeconomic diversity. This school admits  
9 students from both districts and gives a priority to  
10 English language learners and students eligible for  
11 free or reduced price lunch. There are many other  
12 school communities that are committed to increasing  
13 diversity in their schools. We have recently met  
14 with several principals to discuss their goals and  
15 ideas to increase diversity, and we are currently  
16 reviewing the proposals from these schools to  
17 determine how we can be supportive. New schools like  
18 PS 133 present a unique opportunity to work with  
19 communities to establish admissions criteria that  
20 foster diversity. To this end, the DOE's Office of  
21 School Design is developing new schools with the goal  
22 of promoting diversity factored into the design.  
23 Already, OSD has established a leadership training  
24 program designed to help new leaders develop  
25

1 strategies to engage parents and families culturally  
2 relevant approaches of teaching and learning and  
3 student recruitment plans that ensure enrollment of  
4 diverse student population as the school grows. At  
5 the high school level, the citywide admissions  
6 process has introduced more equity and access to  
7 schools in the system. Each year, eighth graders  
8 apply to high schools of their choice and are  
9 centrally matched to a school based on their  
10 interests and a school's admissions criteria.  
11 Consistently, more than 80 percent of eighth graders  
12 are matched to one of their top five choices and  
13 nearly half are matched to their first choice.  
14 Because high schools are open to students from across  
15 the city and families are willing to allow their  
16 older children to travel a bit further for special  
17 programs and academic opportunities, high schools  
18 tend to be more racially, ethnically, and  
19 socioeconomically diverse than are elementary and  
20 middle schools. Additionally, we have many high  
21 school programs that encourage academic diversity  
22 through their educational option admissions method  
23 that explicitly enrolls low, middle and high  
24 performers in proportion to the citywide levels. For  
25

1  
2 example, Queens High School of Teaching, Liberal Arts  
3 and the Sciences serves a diverse student body where  
4 19 percent of the students have special needs and  
5 there is no one major ethnicity. The student body is  
6 10 percent white, 19 percent Latino, 44 percent  
7 African-American, and 25 percent Asian. The school  
8 has an impressive 90 percent graduation rate, and the  
9 vast majority of graduates go on to pursue college.  
10 Our international and ELL focused schools celebrate  
11 the diversity of recent immigrants. At the High  
12 School for Language and Innovation in the Bronx, 78  
13 percent of our English language learners--78 percent  
14 of the students are English language learners and  
15 comprise a diverse group of multilingual students  
16 that is nine percent white, 60 percent Latino, 11  
17 percent African-American, and 17 percent Asian.  
18 Nearly 100 percent of parents at this school  
19 responded on the most recent school survey that they  
20 are satisfied with their child's education, and over  
21 90 percent of students are on track for graduation  
22 after their first year. The shared path to success  
23 reform has provided greater access to an array of  
24 high school programs for students with disabilities.  
25 To ensure access to programs, seats are reserved for

1 students with disabilities in each high school  
2 program in products to the borough's percent of  
3 eighth grade students receiving full time or part  
4 time special education services. Although  
5 perspective high school students now have more  
6 options than a decade ago when high school admissions  
7 were primarily based on attendance zones, we know we  
8 have more work to do to ensure that all families have  
9 access to information and requisite guidance and  
10 support to make informed decisions. We are  
11 continuously working to increase access to our broad  
12 array of schools by increasing our communications to  
13 students and parents and making our recruitment  
14 efforts more robust. We have revamped our family  
15 workshops on high school admissions. These workshops  
16 attracted over 8,000 families this past summer, 20  
17 percent more than in 2013. This year we provided  
18 interpreters, translated materials and piloted a  
19 workshop delivered entirely in Spanish. In addition,  
20 for the first time this year we sent over 3,000 hard  
21 copies of high school directories which were  
22 translated in nine languages to middle schools based  
23 on the student populations they served.  
24 Additionally, to enhance family's abilities to search  
25



1 through information in the high school directory, we  
2 have recently partnered with four organizations to  
3 create admissions apps, which are currently available  
4 on the DOE website. These are web and mobile  
5 applications that families and students can use to  
6 explore school options based on academic programming,  
7 extracurricular activities, school quality  
8 indicators, and location. This year, we have also  
9 introduced an online open house calendar so that  
10 families can easily search for the dates and times of  
11 school open houses rather than having to call each  
12 school individually. While fewer African-American  
13 and Hispanic students attend some of our specialized  
14 high schools than we would hope, the DOE's developed  
15 several programs to increase access to all of our  
16 specialized high schools. Through our Office of  
17 Equity and Access, the DOE created the DREAM  
18 Specialized High School Institute, a 22 month  
19 extracurricular academic enrichment program designed  
20 to help low income middle school students develop the  
21 skills and strategies needed to succeed on the  
22 specialized high school admissions test. Since its  
23 inception in 2012, 847 students have participated in  
24 DREAM SHSI--who have participated in DREAM SHSI have  
25

1 received an offer at one of our specialized high  
2 schools, a success rate of 46 percent. While we  
3 would like to expand the program to meet the demand,  
4 we are limited by funding constraints. We have also  
5 increased access by encouraging a greater number of  
6 top performing students across the city to sign up to  
7 take the SHSAT. We sent all middle school guidance  
8 counselors a list of the top 15 percent of their  
9 students and asked them to ensure that these students  
10 had the opportunity to discuss specialized high  
11 school options and sign up for the test if  
12 interested. This new recruitment strategy resulted  
13 from finding that top performing students are not  
14 equally likely to sign up for the SHSAT. For  
15 example, Latino students, students with disabilities  
16 and English language learners are less likely to sign  
17 up for the SHSAT than other students, even if they  
18 are performing at a high level in middle school.  
19 While we continue to build our understanding of these  
20 disparities, we are actively working to reduce them  
21 through new strategies, and we welcome innovative  
22 ideas from others. Within this work, our Office of  
23 Equity and Access' mission is to provide every family  
24 and every child from all backgrounds and  
25

1  
2 neighborhoods with equal opportunity and access to  
3 high school programs, high quality programs with the  
4 focus on ending longstanding racial, ethnic, and  
5 socioeconomic disparities. We are particularly proud  
6 of our New York City Advanced Placement Expansion  
7 Initiative launched during the 2013/2014 school year  
8 in partnership with the College Board and the  
9 National Math and Science Initiative. The New York  
10 City AP Expansion Initiative is designed to help high  
11 school students prepare to pursue college degrees and  
12 careers in science, technology, engineering, and math  
13 disciplines. The goals of this integrated are to  
14 increase access, participation and performance in  
15 advanced placement for under-represented students  
16 from traditionally underserved communities. The  
17 program is currently serving over 3,000 students  
18 across 64 high schools and contributed to a 35  
19 percent increase in the number of students taking one  
20 or more AP exams. For African-American and Latino  
21 students, the AP Expansion Initiative contributed to  
22 80 percent and 69 percent of the growth respectively.  
23 Creating more diverse learning environments for our  
24 students is a top priority of Mayor Bill de Blasio  
25 and the Chancellor. There is not one size fits all

1 solution to this complex issue, and diversity will  
2 look different in each community. We are committed  
3 to working with our school communities, parents,  
4 elected officials, advocates and other stakeholders  
5 to achieve this goal. To this end, Chancellor  
6 Farina's strategic planning team is partnering with  
7 the Office of Student Enrollment to take a fresh look  
8 at the DOE's admissions and enrollment policies,  
9 which are just some of the tools available to help  
10 promote diversity in our schools. At the same time,  
11 this Administration remains focused on its core  
12 mission to ensure that all students have access to a  
13 high quality education that prepares them for success  
14 in college or careers regardless of their  
15 neighborhood. In one year alone we have made great  
16 progress, including the historic implementation of  
17 pre-k for all, after school programs for all middle  
18 school students, renewed focus on professional  
19 development, the creation of a new framework to  
20 support and evaluate schools, strengthening and  
21 reimagining the role of superintendents,  
22 strengthening and expanding the instruction and  
23 programs for English language learners, establishing  
24 the school renewal program, the multiyear investment  
25

1  
2 to provide targeted support to our most struggling  
3 schools, and introduced 45 new community schools.  
4 While we know we have more to do, we are confident  
5 that we are heading in the right direction. Lastly,  
6 we would like to express our support for proposed  
7 Intro Number 511A, which requires DOE to annually  
8 report on demographic and achievement data about our  
9 students by community school district school and  
10 special program within a school. While we publicly  
11 report much of this data requested, the report  
12 required by the proposed legislation will serve as a  
13 valuable analytic resource for DOE, our school  
14 communities and other stakeholders. Thank you for  
15 the opportunity to testify today. My colleague Robert  
16 Sanft will present to deck to discuss some of our  
17 demographic data.

18 ROBERT SANFT: Good morning. So the goal  
19 of sharing this presentation is largely to expand on  
20 the statements that most people already understand,  
21 which is the demographic breakdown of our schools.  
22 New York City DOE student body has a rich cultural  
23 linguistic and ethnic diversity. Our students  
24 represent over 200 nationalities and they speak more  
25 than 160 languages. As Ursulina mentioned and

1  
2 Chairman Dromm mentioned, the percentages of our  
3 black, Hispanic, Asian, and white students are 28  
4 percent, 40 percent, 15 percent and 14 percent  
5 respectively, but when speaking about diversity it's  
6 equally important to understand that 18 percent of  
7 our students are students with disabilities, 13  
8 percent are English language learners and 79 percent  
9 qualify for free or reduced lunch. But when we are  
10 talking about diversity throughout New York we  
11 thought it was equally important to share with you  
12 how those demographics look across our boroughs, and  
13 this information is available on the New York City  
14 Department of Education website. It is called our  
15 demographic snapshot, and there's information going  
16 back as far as 2007, 2008 on the website. But it  
17 compelling to understand that within the city we have  
18 wide variation in terms of the percentages of each of  
19 these groups across our boroughs, and so what we did  
20 was break up the borough information just to share  
21 with you today, and again, we are happy to make this  
22 information available. It is available for each of  
23 our schools, the districts, the borough, and the city  
24 on our website. But just to share with you some basic  
25 information about the variation within the districts

1  
2 in each of our boroughs. So the Bronx includes  
3 Districts seven through 12. Brooklyn is Districts 13  
4 through 23 and 32. Manhattan is Districts one  
5 through six. Queens is Districts 24 through 30, and  
6 Staten Island is District 31. As Ursulina also  
7 mentioned, within each of those boroughs we have a  
8 few districts that we consider racially isolated  
9 based on having 75 percent or more students enrolled  
10 in their schools of a single race. District six in  
11 Manhattan, District 16, 17, 18, 23, and 32 in  
12 Brooklyn are all considered racially isolated when we  
13 consider that 75 percent of the students in those  
14 schools are of one race. Since 2007/2008, what we  
15 have seen is a slight decrease in the racial  
16 isolation in our schools, but we definitely  
17 understand that we have to focus on this issue a lot  
18 more directly, and over the last several years, what  
19 we also have seen is that from elementary to middle  
20 to high school the percentage of students actually  
21 enrolled in racially isolated schools is quite  
22 different. As Council Member Lander and others have  
23 brought to our attention, the fact that families tend  
24 to send their younger children to zoned schools in  
25 their neighborhoods, neighborhoods that reflect the

1  
2 communities that are around them, we see that  
3 elementary school students are at 30 percent in terms  
4 of the numbers of students attending a racially  
5 isolated school compared with 16 percent at the high  
6 school level where there is greater choice for our  
7 students. Thank you.

8 URSULINA RAMIREZ: With that, we'll take  
9 your questions.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Sure. Well, thank  
11 you. It's an awful lot to digest there and to grasp.  
12 Let me start out mainly just by asking you if you  
13 think that the biggest problems of student diversity  
14 are within or in between districts. Is it intra or  
15 is it interdistricts?

16 ROBERT SANFT: I New York City, I think  
17 it's a combination of those two. Obviously there are  
18 these six districts that we consider to be racially  
19 isolated, and so therefore, the issue is something  
20 that we need to tackle within those districts, but  
21 there are districts that neighbor one another where  
22 schools on the margins of those districts suffer from  
23 some isolation, but also within the districts  
24 themselves. So, I don't know that there's a greater  
25



1  
2 problem in one or the other, but it is definitely  
3 something that merits some investigation.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, 2014's a year in  
5 which the DOE could initiate redistricting, and I  
6 know that at least two school districts, 24 and 30  
7 for example, that are interested in some  
8 redistricting. Some folks have explained to me as  
9 well that if we were to enlarge districts, that may  
10 be a way to look at or to solve this issue. Has the  
11 DOE begun to look at the prospect of doing  
12 redistricting this year, and would that fit into the  
13 creation of more diverse schools?

14 URSULINA RAMIREZ: So, I will touch on--  
15 we haven't taken it off the table to look at  
16 redistricting. I think--

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] I'm  
18 sorry, could you speak up a little?

19 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Oh, yeah, sorry about  
20 that. It hasn't been taken off the table to look at  
21 redistricting, but as you know, it is incredibly  
22 complex and there are many layers to it. Rob, feel  
23 free to jump in if there's anything in terms of the  
24 diversity.

1  
2 ROBERT SANFT: I think it requires an  
3 extensive amount of engagement and partnership with  
4 the Council, with our communities and our community  
5 education councils to understand specifically what  
6 local and district goals might be, and then  
7 ultimately where we could partner both across  
8 districts to decide on what the appropriate  
9 redistricting might look like, but it would be an  
10 extensive process and a complex process.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So it's my  
12 understanding that those districts haven't been  
13 really looked at since 1994, approximately 20 years  
14 ago. Do you have a plan to moving forward to begin  
15 to look at that, or is not in the works or on the  
16 table at this point?

17 URSULINA RAMIREZ: I would say that  
18 everything is on the table, but it is--it's very  
19 methodical in terms of the process and looking at all  
20 the policies it can potentially impact the diversity  
21 of our schools. So, it's on the table, but we just  
22 started to do this deep dive.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, can we expect at  
24 some point in the future a report back to us about  
25 what you might be doing in that regard?

1  
2 URSULINA RAMIREZ: We will definitely come  
3 back to you with our assessment.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And how long do you  
5 think that might be?

6 URSULINA RAMIREZ: We're being very  
7 methodical, so it might take some time, but we'll get  
8 back to you.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, I think that's  
10 something that I personally would like to really look  
11 at and to explore further with you, and not only  
12 because the districts that I mentioned are in my  
13 council district, but because I do view it as a  
14 potentially a good way to look at the diversity issue  
15 in our schools. So, do you work with the Community  
16 Education Councils to address the problems regarding  
17 student diversity?

18 ROBERT SANFT: So, we work directly with  
19 Community Education Councils 13 and 15 to address the  
20 proposal around 133 in Brooklyn. We have also worked  
21 with CEC 15 on a recent rezoning proposal in order to  
22 accomplish the dual goals of looking at overcrowding  
23 across some of our elementary schools and how we  
24 could maintain diversity across schools. We have met  
25 with several principals to consider proposals that

1  
2 are of interest to them in terms of maintaining or  
3 creating diversity within their schools, and we're  
4 happy to meet with our Community Education Councils  
5 if they have specific goals in mind.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, in working with  
7 those CEC's, is the diversity a part of the  
8 discussion when you consider zones within those  
9 districts, when you're creating new zones for  
10 different schools? Is the diversity question a part  
11 of that discussion? Or is it only geographics?

12 ROBERT SANFT: I think there are multiple  
13 goals when we would discuss any form of unzoning or  
14 rezoning with a CEC. The CEC's actually have the  
15 authority to approve and submit rezoning and unzoning  
16 proposals, but ultimately it looks at a number of  
17 things including overcrowding, diversity and how our  
18 students are going to best be able to commute from  
19 home to school.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So how much latitude  
21 to CEC's have in changing those zones?

22 ROBERT SANFT: CEC's have the ultimate  
23 latitude in changing the zones. They work with their  
24 superintendents to create either new rezonings or  
25 unzonings and we are happy to support them in those

1  
2 efforts and to look strategically if there are things  
3 that they are not necessary considering when thinking  
4 about it.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, I'm going to  
6 stop here and then I'll also go to some of my  
7 colleagues, because they have questions. Okay, so  
8 first up will be Council Member Mark Weprin followed  
9 by King and then Council Member Levine.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Thank you, Mr.  
11 Chair. So, let me start out, and I don't know who to  
12 ask it to so you guys can choose. But let's start--  
13 let me start with the standardized high school exam.  
14 So, I agree that, you know, it is shocking sometimes  
15 when you see the numbers at Stuyvesant High School  
16 how few black and Latinos tend to get into that  
17 school, and you mentioned that you were working,  
18 actively working to eliminate the disparity. Can you  
19 tell me what DOE has done over the years, and in this  
20 past year in particular to eliminate that disparity?  
21 I know you mention sending out a list of who your  
22 smarter, you know, highest scoring students are, but  
23 can you elaborate on what you've done to fix it?

24

25

1  
2 ROBERT SANFT: When you speak about the  
3 disparity in terms of the diversity of the schools,  
4 is that--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: [interposing]  
6 Yeah, in those specialized high schools in  
7 particular.

8 ROBERT SANFT: So there are a number of  
9 things. We've, a few years back, we actually moved  
10 up the date where we shared the specialized high  
11 school handbooks with our students. It used to be  
12 distributed at the beginning of the eighth grade  
13 year, and now it is distributed towards the end of  
14 the seventh grade year in May and June to afford them  
15 the opportunity of more time to consider their  
16 options and to think about whether or not they want  
17 to take the test. We've offered up more workshops  
18 throughout the city to discuss the specialized high  
19 schools and the admissions test specifically. We  
20 send out post cards to all of our entering eighth  
21 grade students to let them know not only about our  
22 fairs citywide and borough, but also about the  
23 upcoming admissions test, and we work with all of our  
24 middle school guidance counselors to make sure that  
25 they are discussing these options with families and

1  
2 to also more recently alert them to the correlation  
3 between our higher performers and kids who are not  
4 signing up for the test.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Sound like great  
6 ideas of sending out information, but obviously that  
7 information goes to everyone, so it's just as likely  
8 even to up the white and Asian test takers as much as  
9 the black and Latinos to some degree. The numbers  
10 that tend to jump out at me are while 70 percent of  
11 our students in the schools are black and Latino, 40  
12 something percent are actually taking the  
13 standardized high school admission exam. And I have  
14 to think part of that is the fact that there is not  
15 the same--there's more of a stigma attached in some  
16 neighborhoods where taking that test may not be  
17 something you want to announce that you want to take,  
18 or there is students who are not taking that test who  
19 should be, which is why you're trying to advertise  
20 it. Has there been any thought to mandating that  
21 these students take the test? We had a yes out  
22 there.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: However, I do want to  
24 caution that we're not going to have calling out from  
25

1  
2 the audience today, or I will ask to have people that  
3 do removed from the room.

4 URSULINA RAMIREZ: So we're actually  
5 looking for the future. We're looking at both the  
6 access, the programs that both DREAM and Discovery.  
7 We're looking at the exam itself and we are looking  
8 at measures. So I want to--the Administration is  
9 taking a really deep assessment on what we want to  
10 do, and I do think that is one of the options that we  
11 are looking at when it comes to access.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Because, you  
13 know, currently for instance the PSAT is given to  
14 every students, I believe. I think you maybe opt out  
15 or something, but every student takes the PSAT and  
16 they do it during school hours in their own school.  
17 That would seem to me a lot better way to go about  
18 trying to do even this test, having people the option  
19 of opting out or at least giving it mandatory to  
20 everyone who scores a certain amount or everybody,  
21 but within their own school. Would that be something  
22 we can look at, because that seems to me would up the  
23 numbers, obviously, of test takers for sure, and we'd  
24 get equal amount of test takers compared to the  
25 percentage of black and Latino students.



1  
2           URSULINA RAMIREZ: We'll definitely look  
3 into that, and that's definitely an option.

4           COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: I mean, that  
5 seems like a logical thing to attempt before we make  
6 major changes to the test or to the admissions  
7 policy. You know, that's what sticks with me here is  
8 that, you know, these schools have been around a long  
9 time. Seventy years we've been doing this test and  
10 this one test, and I agree there are issues here, and  
11 obviously diversity's a problem. The problem is, you  
12 know, every year Newsweek comes out with their best,  
13 you know, schools in the country, and I'm always very  
14 proud that a lot of New York schools make that list,  
15 particularly these specialized high schools. So it  
16 seems to me a little crazy to like tinker with that  
17 without first trying other options. So mandating the  
18 test, to me, sounds like one good option. Another  
19 one, another problem and this is definitely a problem  
20 is test prep. In my neighborhood in eastern Queens  
21 it is everywhere. There are test prep places all  
22 over. Some kids start in third grade and they start  
23 doing test prep, and it's an unfair advantage for  
24 those who do that. And I realize that in some  
25 neighborhoods where they don't have the means or

1  
2 other ways of going about doing this, they are not  
3 test prepping as much as they should. Ironically,  
4 I'm the one who's always been against test prep. I  
5 want to be clear. I've never been against the idea  
6 of test prepping when it helps that student. I  
7 always hated the fact that it was test prepping to  
8 help the teachers, principals, chancellors, and  
9 mayors. That's what always bothered me. So, my  
10 thing--there's got to be ways to mandate students  
11 before the standardized high school exam comes out to  
12 not only mandate they take it, but we're going to let  
13 you know how to take it and prep you for it. And  
14 there are ways to do it, whether it's in school or  
15 online. I'll give them a shout out. The Conn Academy  
16 is one you see a lot about lately where it's an  
17 online course you can take, and the kids can learn  
18 how to take those tests. So, I know I got beeped  
19 here, so I'm going to end. But to me, it just sounds  
20 like quite the risk to mess with something that's  
21 worked so well through the years without first trying  
22 to up that diversity numbers in what I think are more  
23 logically ways. Because I get the feeling we're  
24 attacking the symptoms and not the cause, which is  
25 less kids are taking the test and they're not prepped

1  
2 properly for the test. So, if we should try that  
3 first, we should try that first before we go about  
4 changing the standard, in my opinion. And the last  
5 thing--

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Thank  
7 you, Council Member, I'm going to have to limit you  
8 here.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Okay. I was  
10 just--Queens High School for Teaching is in my  
11 district and we love it. It just happens to be a  
12 little bit of an anomaly to where it's laid out in  
13 that it feeds from two schools, one from District 29,  
14 one from District 26, which happens to be two  
15 completely different ethnicity schools and it works  
16 out great. I was there the other day. It's a great  
17 school. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you very  
19 much. And now we'll hear from Council Member Andy  
20 King.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Good morning.  
22 Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I want to thank you all  
23 for your testimony this morning. Like Mr. Chair  
24 said, yes it's a lot to digest, but I want to thank  
25 you all for at least coming here and giving us some

1 information about what you've attempted to do, what  
2 you plan on doing and still there's a lot that needs  
3 to be done. While I am one that supports fairness in  
4 the education system, I am somewhat reserved when we  
5 start trying to figure out how do we diminish the  
6 standards that we know that every child needs to be  
7 successful adults. With that all being said, I'm  
8 hearing the conversations outside of not wanting the  
9 change in the testing, not only using the test as the  
10 sole entry point for our students. But I want to  
11 thank my colleagues for actually putting these three  
12 thoughtful, three pieces of legislation on the table  
13 so we can have this dialogue in diversity, and I  
14 would even ask those who are fighting outside saying  
15 understand what this resolution is asking of us and  
16 how do we make sure that institutions have  
17 historically educated children, that all children  
18 have access to that same education. Poverty doesn't  
19 mean incompetency, and I want to make sure that even  
20 though my children in our communities may not be  
21 rich, but their brains are functioning as well as  
22 those who might have a better chance because of the  
23 financial status of their families. So, I want to  
24 ask you a couple of questions based on this.  
25

1  
2 Depending on these resos and the intros that are  
3 introduced today, do you and does the Administration  
4 support them, and if you do not, what would you add  
5 or tweak so you can support them in that frame?  
6 Second question is what would you say to anybody who  
7 is out here listening about making sure that we are  
8 careful when we start talking about the environment,  
9 because when I look at some of the groups that are  
10 sharing it's not a mixed group who are sharing their  
11 displeasure. So, I want to make sure that we don't  
12 disrespect one group for another group as we--because  
13 again, we're still talking about children, and I  
14 don't want adults issues to fall down on children,  
15 because children--discrimination and prejudice is a  
16 learned behavior, and I want to make sure that when  
17 you go in the school that you're taught the right  
18 thing, because we are a mixed melting pot in the city  
19 of New York in education system. So that's my second  
20 question. And going back into this test, Council  
21 Member just mentioned that about how do we test,  
22 what's--I want to know what has been the feedback  
23 from some of the families that you've reached out to  
24 on what challenges they might have had, middle school  
25 families, when it comes to having access to this test

1  
2 or even taking this test, or prepping for this test?  
3 Is there that communication with these families of  
4 what's expected of them? And I'll stop right there.

5 URSULINA RAMIREZ: So, I'll address your  
6 first question. I might have to ask you to repeat  
7 your second question, but I think I got the third one  
8 down. On your first question, as the City Council  
9 knows, we generally don't comment on resolutions, but  
10 we do support the Intro 511A in terms of providing  
11 data to the Council. We think that this will be a  
12 useful tool for the communities and the Council. In  
13 terms of question number two, Council Member, I might  
14 ask that you repeat it.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Well, you said--you  
16 say you support the Intro, so--

17 URSULINA RAMIREZ: [interposing] Yeah.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: So it doesn't mean  
19 that there was anything that you would tweak or  
20 adjust, but I would like to know, what would you say  
21 to anybody who is not in support of any of that piece  
22 of legislation?

23 URSULINA RAMIREZ: The intro?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Yes.  
25

1  
2 URSULINA RAMIREZ: I think first and  
3 foremost, a lot of the data that we will be providing  
4 is available on the DOE's website, but I do think it  
5 provides an opportunity for school communities and  
6 for both parent advocates and all stakeholders to  
7 look at the analytics of our districts. And I think  
8 Rob provided a lot of detail that I think is useful  
9 for this conversation when we talk about diversity.  
10 So, I think that it will be productive. It'll be  
11 useful and productive for the dialogues that we have  
12 in the future.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay. There is a  
14 third question, and I was asking about what feedback  
15 have you had from the families of color that you've  
16 reached out to the middle school, and what challenges  
17 have they relayed back that they're having?

18 AINSLEY RUDOLFO: So, I think in terms of  
19 a couple of things. The first thing is in terms of  
20 Council Member Weprin. We haven't seen any kid or  
21 any family who has a stigma in taking the test.  
22 Every kid or family that we've interacted with around  
23 the DREAM Program, which is our primary prep program  
24 for the test, has welcomed the DREAM and wants to  
25 take the test. So we haven't really seen folks

1 saying, "Hey, I don't want to take the test." Right?  
2 We've seen some discussion of parents saying, "Hey, I  
3 may not want to send my child to Stuyvesant once they  
4 get in because of, you know, the relief that  
5 Stuyvesant isn't fully integrated." But we haven't  
6 seen anyone saying, "We don't want to take the test."  
7 What we have learned in terms of DREAM, and we've  
8 been doing DREAM for about three years now, which as  
9 I said is our primary prep program for the test, is  
10 in some geographic districts in the city there's  
11 issues with getting the information out to students  
12 who qualify for the DREAM Program and keeping them  
13 enrolled in the duration of the DREAM Program, which  
14 is 22 months in length, that test prep program. So  
15 we've seen a lot of issues particularly in some parts  
16 of Brooklyn, in the south Bronx, in central Harlem in  
17 terms of continuity of the 22 months of parents  
18 [sic]. And of course, you know, the normal  
19 activities come with in terms of daily living, right?  
20 Parents are working. Kids are taking care of their  
21 siblings. Some transportation issues which we can  
22 mitigate in terms of bussing and metro cards, but  
23 life has been getting in the way a lot of times for  
24 some of those kids in those areas. That's the first  
25



1 thing. The second thing that we are seeing is  
2 unfortunately, some of our kids are coming in  
3 underprepared for the level of instruction that's  
4 taking place in the DREAM prep program. And you  
5 know, I like to say that unfortunately all middle  
6 schools are not created equally, and we're doing a  
7 better job of leveling the playing fields in terms of  
8 middle school instruction and elementary school  
9 instruction, and the Common Core hopefully is going  
10 to do some of that for us, but it's a fact. We have  
11 some kids coming into the program at different levels  
12 of functioning in terms of academic functioning, and  
13 we have to play catch up a lot of times with those  
14 kids. So there's some frustration built in there,  
15 right, and we're working through that. And then the  
16 third piece that we are seeing at times is the  
17 communication between school and parents, and you  
18 know, we have to do a better job than that. For  
19 example, if you are a six to 12 school, right, and  
20 you have level threes and fours, it's inherent the  
21 principal won't want to lose those kids to  
22 Stuyvesant, right? You want to keep the level threes  
23 and fours in your school, right? So we may see some  
24 situations where the kids are not getting the  
25

1  
2 information, and we've been doing a pretty good job  
3 of really ensuring kids are getting the information.  
4 We are sending out, as Rob said, post cards to kids.  
5 We are working with CBO's in the community to get the  
6 word out and working directly with families, and of  
7 course, sort of strongly saying to principals, "You  
8 need to get this information out to kids." So we are  
9 not mandating it, but we are strongly suggesting that  
10 you've got to get this information out to all the  
11 kids.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you. I'm  
13 sorry.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Didn't mean to cut  
16 you off. I thought you were finished. Thank you  
17 very much. We've been joined by Council Member Peter  
18 Koo, Council Member Antonio Reynoso, Council Member  
19 Jumaane Williams and Council Member Debbie Rose.  
20 Now, turn it over to Council Member Levine for  
21 questioning followed by Lander and Chin. Oh, and  
22 Council Member Gentile. I'm sorry. Vinnie Gentile  
23 from Brooklyn.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Thank you, chair  
25 Dromm, and thank you all for being here. You--I'd

1  
2 like to ask some follow-up questions on this very  
3 important DREAM Program. As Council Member Weprin  
4 laid out, if you're a child who's lucky enough to  
5 have parents who have the financial means and the  
6 motivation, then you're more likely to get into a  
7 program to prepare you for the test, and the idea of  
8 the Specialized High School Institution, AKA DREAM  
9 Program, is exactly to compensate for that. So that  
10 even a kid whose parents don't have a penny to put  
11 towards this can get top notch training. That  
12 program's been cut--had been cut dramatically in the  
13 last few years. I'd like to hear what the current  
14 funding is. Have the previous cuts been restored,  
15 and how many kids are you serving, and how long is  
16 the program now? That also had been cut  
17 significantly.

18           AINSLEY RUDOLFO: So, I--there are two  
19 things. Remember, the DREAM is not the only prep  
20 program that we have in this city that's free, right?  
21 Schools do prep program also. So principals have the  
22 option to pay for prep programs out of their budget,  
23 and we have tons of schools that do that. So there's  
24 much more kids than DREAM get in true prep free,  
25 right? In terms of the funding, I'll let Ursulina

1  
2 pick up on the funding, but in terms of the numbers,  
3 right, we have this year we have about 6,000 kids  
4 that are eligible that qualify for DREAM based on the  
5 eligibility criteria and we have about 1,450 seats,  
6 right, about 1,450 seats in the program.

7 URSULINA RAMIREZ: I'm going to have to  
8 get back to you on the funding piece.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: But the program  
10 used to begin in the summer of the sixth grade and  
11 then there were budget cuts and you pushed it back  
12 until sometime in the seventh grade, maybe summer of  
13 the seventh grade. Where are we at now?

14 AINSLEY RUDOLFO: No, no, we're back in  
15 the sixth grade. So we are starting kids in the  
16 current cohort is in the sixth grade, right? And the  
17 incoming cohort will be in the sixth grade. We only  
18 started in the seventh grade one year. That was a  
19 transition between, I guess, Cline [sp?] or Cathy  
20 Black and Dennis. When we had that transition there,  
21 we started the program in the seventh grade where we  
22 ended the institute, the old specialized high school  
23 program and trans--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: [interposing] Got  
25 it. And given that the core mission of the program is

1  
2 to increase enrollment among African-American and  
3 Latino students, what portion of the participants are  
4 African-American and Latino?

5 AINSLEY RUDOLFO: So in terms of Latinos  
6 we have about 27 percent and black 20 percent, and of  
7 course--

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: [interposing]  
9 Okay, so less than half. I understand there was a  
10 lawsuit--

11 ROBERT SANFT: [interposing] Council  
12 Member, the actual mission is for disadvantaged or  
13 primarily low income families, and so it is not  
14 specifically about our black and Hispanic students.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: This is  
16 complicated terrain and there was a lawsuit that has  
17 influenced the design of the program and the language  
18 in which you talk about that. I understand, but this  
19 issue is front and center in part because of the very  
20 low enrollment of African-American and Latino  
21 students at specialized high schools. And if the  
22 main citywide tool that we have is not directly  
23 addressing that, then I think we need to redesign the  
24 program or the admission criteria, and I believe that  
25 it could be done in a way that pass constitutional

1  
2 muster and that was fair and didn't explicitly target  
3 based on race, but that perhaps got more directly at  
4 under-represented groups.

5 ROBERT SANFT: I think like most of the  
6 things that we will discuss today, we're definitely  
7 open to conversation about that and discussing with  
8 folks.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Okay. Since I  
10 have only a little bit of time left, I want to shift  
11 gears. You didn't mention a lot of solutions. You  
12 didn't endorse a lot of solutions to the broader  
13 diversity problem in New York City, and that's okay,  
14 I know--we're not expecting you to come with all the  
15 answers today. You did, however, mention one program  
16 you like which is dual language schools, which I'm  
17 also a very big supporter of. Almost by definition  
18 they bring a diverse group of students because its  
19 part native speakers of the language being taught and  
20 part non-native speakers. Great model. How many  
21 dual language schools do we have? Are we increasing  
22 them? At what pace?

23 ROBERT SANFT: I think we need to get  
24 back to you with the specific number of solely dual  
25 language schools. We have international schools. We

1  
2 have schools that are focused on our English language  
3 learners that are not specifically international  
4 schools. We also have a large number of schools that  
5 have dual language programs within them that are not  
6 entirely dual language. So we definitely get you  
7 those numbers.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Okay. And lastly,  
9 you referred to the idea that when you create a new  
10 school you've got the opportunity to design admission  
11 criteria, zoning, etcetera in a way that can promote  
12 diversity from the outside. What are the tools that  
13 you use in that scenario? What are the--what does  
14 good admission criteria look like if we want to  
15 promote a more diverse student body?

16 ROBERT SANFT: I think much like the data  
17 around individual districts, we would need to partner  
18 with the local community as we are doing on the Upper  
19 West Side with respect to West Side Secondary School,  
20 but ultimately, to look at what the goals in terms of  
21 diversity and academic outcomes, the number of  
22 different things with that community to determine  
23 what the best admissions criteria might be. It might  
24 not be a cookie cutter approach to doing things, a  
25 one size fits all doesn't seem to work district to

1  
2 district, borough to borough. We'd ultimately want to  
3 work with the community to decide what their goals  
4 are for diversity, not only within the new school  
5 design, but with respect to what the impact of  
6 opening those new schools might be on the surrounding  
7 schools.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Okay, thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Before I  
10 go to Council Member Lander, I wanted to ask, from  
11 what I've heard a lot of the questions that are on  
12 the test, the specialized high school test, are  
13 questions that are not necessarily part of the  
14 curriculum of the Department of Education. Is that  
15 true?

16 AINSLEY RUDOLFO: Well, the test as you  
17 know is done--

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Can you  
19 speak into the mic?

20 AINSLEY RUDOLFO: A third party designed  
21 the test, and there's been some discussion that the  
22 test doesn't reflect the middle school curriculum,  
23 right? So people say, "Hey, the test is a--to test  
24 the test." I'm sure--I'm not sure that's 100 percent  
25



1  
2 accurate that everything on the test is not covered  
3 in middle school.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And that's why I  
5 understand that the preparation is so important is  
6 because a lot of that is not really covered in the  
7 schools itself. I'm right. Thank you. And then who  
8 actually writes the test, or how do you get the test,  
9 or where does the test come from?

10 URSULINA RAMIREZ: The test is developed  
11 through an RFP process. Sorry, it predates my  
12 joining the DOE in January, and there is a current  
13 RFP process happening right now to look at  
14 alternative exams.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Do you know the  
16 company? You don't know the--

17 ROBERT SANFT: [interposing] The current  
18 test is Pearson [sp?].

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I'm sorry?

20 ROBERT SANFT: The current test is  
21 Pearson.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Pearson? The Pearson  
23 test, okay. Thank you. Have you all seen that test?  
24  
25

1  
2 ROBERT SANFT: I have seen the test over  
3 the years and reviewed the specialized high school  
4 handbook that we issue to all of our students.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: It just seems to me  
6 unfair if we are testing students on stuff that  
7 they're not being taught in the schools, which is the  
8 prerogative. You know, I'm not arguing that one way  
9 or the other, but just doesn't seem right that  
10 they're going to be expected to have to get it  
11 somewhere else. Anyway, that's in a further  
12 discussion I would like to have with you as well as  
13 we move along down this path. So Council Member  
14 Lander?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you very  
16 much, Chair Dromm, and thanks again to this panel for  
17 your testimony, and I just--I really do want to  
18 appreciate the work forward so far. I have tried in  
19 the previous Administration to push some of these  
20 issues and was not able to achieve even a dialogue,  
21 much less concrete steps forward. So, while there is  
22 a long way to go, I really appreciate what you've  
23 done, and I'm gratified by your support of 511A and  
24 look forward to working with you to finalize it and  
25 move it forward. I know you don't comment on

1  
2 resolutions and so you don't speak to Council Member  
3 Torres's, but I guess I would just like your  
4 thoughts. The DOE's diversity and inclusion policy  
5 currently focuses on equal opportunity and  
6 nondiscrimination in employment and procurement. I  
7 just wonder if you've thought at all about  
8 establishing a specific chancellor reg base or other  
9 policy that established diversity as one of the  
10 goals, which obviously you're incorporating in many  
11 places, but at least as I see doesn't exist as, you  
12 know, a policy of the DOE as a broad goal and whether  
13 you've looked at moving in that direction.

14 URSULINA RAMIREZ: The DOE and the  
15 Chancellor recognize the importance of diversity and  
16 are continuing to make it a priority within our  
17 schools. We're considering what a policy might look  
18 like, because every community is different and so  
19 having a blanket policy might be not in the best  
20 interest of our schools. So we are looking at that.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Great,  
22 understood, and I think you hear in the spirit of the  
23 hearing as a recognition that there's not a one size  
24 fits all model, but still a goal of moving in that  
25 direction is valuable. One more policy question. I

1  
2 think one challenge here, and Rob, you and I have  
3 talked about this, is that the admissions policies of  
4 our 1,700 schools are all over the place and  
5 sometimes hard even to know what they are. I know  
6 you've talked about trying to create some additional  
7 transparency so New Yorkers, students, parents, you  
8 know, everyone would have more clarity just school by  
9 school on what the admissions policies are. Can you  
10 give us a quick update on that?

11           ROBERT SANFT: Sure. So, I think you're  
12 referencing specifically the admissions criteria for  
13 our screened and auditions schools, primarily. Our  
14 screen schools are comprised of screen schools that  
15 use academics as the basis for their selection  
16 criteria and others that are screened specifically  
17 for language or language plus academics, and  
18 ultimately what we are doing is we are working  
19 individually with each of the schools at the middle  
20 and high school levels to document the rubrics that  
21 they use when they are considering all of the  
22 applicants to their programs so that we can put those  
23 online for families to use in addition to the brief  
24 amount of information that we supply to them in the  
25 directory. Another thing that we have been doing is

1  
2 at every level trying to refine our directories that  
3 we publish for elementary schools for kindergarten  
4 and pre-k, but also for middle and high school so  
5 that families understand specifically what the  
6 threshold admissions criteria are and then ultimately  
7 these will refine that to say, "and here's how we are  
8 considering those in different weights for our  
9 programs."

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: So that's very  
11 helpful, and I would just urge--I would urge  
12 continuing that across the system as well. It's lot  
13 of schools. They, even at the elementary level as  
14 we're talking about, have different admissions models  
15 and criteria, and you know, doing as much as we can  
16 to make sure everyone is clear school by school what  
17 they are is valuable and helpful to parents and kids  
18 considering those schools, but also in the broader  
19 goals here. I thought you did a very good job in the  
20 testimony talking about a few of the school based  
21 models that help us get at diversity, educational  
22 option models like PS 133. We're going to hear from  
23 some people later really focused on the district  
24 based models, especially advocates in one, three and  
25 13 advocating this model of what they call controlled

1  
2 choice, moving away at a district level from zoning,  
3 you know, with CEC's working on this together and  
4 toward models that involve a mix of choice and  
5 balance and inclusion. Can you comment on the DOE's  
6 thinking about and dialogue with those districts and  
7 how you're--?

8 ROBERT SANFT: We have had some  
9 preliminary conversations with CEC leaders and  
10 members from those districts regarding controlled  
11 choice in the past, and we are happy to engage them  
12 going forward to discuss what they'd like to see as  
13 the goals for their districts, and as you mentioned,  
14 a balance of choice and controlled choice.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Okay, thank you.  
16 I'll go back on the bottom and ask one or two more.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Sure. Council Member  
18 Chin?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you, Chair  
20 Dromm. Thank you to the panel. My question is that,  
21 did the DOE have statistics on what are the, you  
22 know, the student that got accepted to the three  
23 specialized high school, do you have statistic of  
24 which middle school that most of these students come  
25 from?

1  
2 ROBERT SANFT: Yes, we have data on the  
3 feeder patterns for those schools in terms of where  
4 the students are coming from middle school.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: So, based on that  
6 analysis, do you use that analysis to see? Like,  
7 most of the school that they're going to Bronx High  
8 School Science, are they coming from Bronx or they're  
9 coming from middle schools in Queens?

10 ROBERT SANFT: I don't have the data in  
11 front of me, but we would be happy to pull some data  
12 together that would summarize specifically where the  
13 students are coming from their middle schools, and  
14 we'd be happy to share that.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Yeah, I think it's  
16 important to really look at those data and see which  
17 are the middle school that are sending students to  
18 these specialized high schools and why that. And  
19 maybe that will help you focus on really improving  
20 the quality of the middle schools in our city.  
21 Because in your testimony you talked about you send  
22 the list of tops students in the middle school to the  
23 high school, I mean, to the counselor, and but I  
24 don't think that's enough. You know, you could send  
25 them a list, but what about the resources that they

1  
2 need to really kind of educate these students that  
3 there are all these opportunity out there, and at the  
4 same time, there are a lot of great public schools in  
5 the city, and not just those three specialized high  
6 schools. So, that in certain community, like for  
7 example, Asian communities, yeah, I mean, parents  
8 sacrifice to send their kids to prep school and they  
9 think that those three schools are the best and  
10 that's it, but we have other really good high schools  
11 that parents don't know about. So with the high  
12 school directory, I think that process needs to start  
13 earlier to really educate parents, immigrant parents,  
14 low incomes parents in terms of the school choice  
15 that they have. And I know that in your testimony  
16 you're talking about apps and all those things, those  
17 are for parents who are more active. I mean, they  
18 know how to use a computer, knows to use an app, but  
19 I think for a lot of immigrant parents, low income  
20 families, they need to get that information. That's  
21 important as anyone else. So, I think that's  
22 something that DOE really needs to look at, because  
23 if you know the top students across the city in the  
24 middle schools, then it's really--we need to put the  
25 resources to help them. And I'm not sure that we're



1  
2 doing that now, because in your testimony you still  
3 talking about funding. Everything is limited by  
4 funding restraints. So, I think that's the part that  
5 we have to look at. How do we provide enough funding  
6 so that we can help these high achieving students to  
7 get into the best schools?

8           URSULINA RAMIREZ: Thank you. And we are  
9 open to your idea of how we increase access and  
10 information to communities, in particular communities  
11 of color to make sure that our students are taking  
12 the exams. So, but we've given this information to  
13 our guidance counselors, and we're always looking for  
14 other ways to make sure that we're providing them  
15 information so that we can make sure that students  
16 are taking the exams.

17           COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: I mean, my  
18 colleague, you know, Council Member Weprin talked  
19 about, you know, giving the test to every student  
20 that want to take it in the school. I mean, it's  
21 like, it may not be a bad idea to open that up to  
22 everyone, because some students don't even know about  
23 the test, because their school don't talk about it.  
24 But, also we also have to sort of publicize all the  
25 good high school that we have. Like in my district,

1  
2 I have the Harbor School on Governor's Island. It's a  
3 great school, and we need to--and we're expanding it,  
4 but we have a lot of great schools throughout the  
5 city and we really need to get that information to  
6 students and families. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Response  
8 or no?

9 AINSLEY RUDOLFO: Well, I think, you know,  
10 we--I agree. We have 1,700 great schools in the city.  
11 All of our schools are great schools, and we are  
12 doing a pretty good job of getting the word out about  
13 other high schools other than the specialized high  
14 schools. We have seen where kids have gotten an  
15 offer to the specialized high school and turned it  
16 down to go to a non-specialized high school. So, you  
17 know, your word is taken, but I think we're doing a  
18 much better job.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: I think with that  
20 it'd be good for DOE to also capture some data,  
21 because I think what, over almost 30,000 students  
22 take the test. Not everybody gets in, right? So  
23 where do these students go? I mean, a lot of  
24 students still end up in other high schools, so it  
25

1  
2 might be good to really have some data in terms of,  
3 you know, the schools that our student ends up in.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Okay, now  
5 we're going to have Council Member Rose followed by  
6 Koo, and then Council Member Gentile.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Good afternoon. I  
8 have--I looked at the demographics, the borough  
9 demographics, and I wanted to know, Staten Island has  
10 one school district, so wouldn't this skew the data  
11 that--

12 ROBERT SANFT: [interposing] How so?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: that you presented  
14 in terms of racially isolated districts. Since we  
15 have one, only one district, wouldn't it be more  
16 appropriate in the case of Staten Island to talk  
17 about racially isolated schools since we only have  
18 one district?

19 ROBERT SANFT: So the purpose of this  
20 data was really to start to look at specifically when  
21 we're talking about the city, the variation first  
22 within borough and then yes, within district, but  
23 because Staten Island is only one district,  
24 ultimately we are looking at borough as district.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Right, so that data  
3 would be skewed? It wouldn't be accurate in terms of  
4 by school. Do you have a breakdown of by schools,  
5 and--okay.

6 ROBERT SANFT: Absolutely. On our  
7 website we share, and again, per the support for the  
8 Intro we'll be looking at how we refine the data that  
9 we are sharing, but we do share a school level look  
10 at the demographics that then rolls up to a district  
11 level, a borough level and ultimately the citywide  
12 level and it provides data over the last seven years.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: And do we have on  
14 Staten Island any racially isolated schools?

15 ROBERT SANFT: I would have to get back  
16 to you, but I could look to see whether or not there  
17 are. And again, what we're talking about in terms of  
18 racial isolation is above 75 percent for one specific  
19 race or ethnicity. I do believe there are a handful,  
20 but I don't know the number off hand.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Well, I'm going to  
22 say yes, we have some racially isolated schools in my  
23 district, and I'd like to know what triggers and who  
24 triggers the discussion on zoning?

1  
2           ROBERT SANFT: Generally, it can be a  
3 number of folks. The CEC's can trigger the  
4 discussion on rezoning and zoning. The  
5 superintendent can trigger that conversation, and the  
6 Department of Education can come to a CEC and discuss  
7 rezoning if they think it's in the best interest with  
8 respect to overcrowding conditions or a number of  
9 different issues that any district might be having.

10           COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: So, what would get  
11 them to look at it? What would sort of be the  
12 impetus for them to look at it, at rezoning a school?

13           ROBERT SANFT: There are a number of  
14 things that could potentially trigger it. If  
15 ultimately a new school was opening in the district  
16 and they wanted to figure out how to change the zone  
17 lines to accommodate the new school. If the district  
18 was interested in exploring choice either in certain  
19 schools in the district or throughout the district,  
20 they might consider unzoning. If diversity was a  
21 goal of the district, they might consider utilizing  
22 rezoning as a way of changing the specific lines  
23 around each of our schools. So, there could be a  
24 variety of reasons for why they--

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: [interposing] Do  
3 they ever look at school performance in terms of  
4 rezoning?

5 ROBERT SANFT: I can't speak specifically  
6 for each of the CEC's, but I would gather that most  
7 of them would look at school performance in terms of  
8 how they can address school performance from school  
9 to school within the districts, but ultimately you  
10 could use rezoning as a tool to--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: [interposing] So  
12 DOE doesn't look at school performance. They don't  
13 look at the ethnic breakdown in schools and then  
14 determine that they, DOE, should make some moves in  
15 terms of rezoning?

16 ROBERT SANFT: There have been instances  
17 where DOE has worked with CEC's to recommend changes  
18 in zone lines to address issues of performance. In  
19 district seven and district 23 in the Bronx and  
20 Brooklyn respectively, DOE has worked with the CEC's  
21 to unzone the schools to create choice opportunities  
22 for the families within those district.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: I'm concerned that  
24 we have low performing schools, chronically low  
25 performing schools and we're not looking at rezoning

1  
2 them to sort of change the demographic. That there's  
3 nothing that pushes or propels DOE to look at low  
4 performing schools, the number of schools that are  
5 getting students into specialized high schools.  
6 They're not looking at all of the data and then  
7 saying that maybe this school needs to be rezoned  
8 because of they're not able to meet the criteria  
9 chronically.

10           URSULINA RAMIREZ: I definitely think  
11 we're taking a look, you know, with our school  
12 renewal program and just looking at our  
13 underperforming schools to look at the academics  
14 within the schools, both the pedagogy, the curriculum  
15 and rezoning is obviously an option and it's a tool.  
16 I think right now our primary focus for under  
17 performing schools is on the curriculum and teaching  
18 and the leadership within the school. But if CEC 31  
19 is interested in having conversations about rezoning,  
20 we're definitely open to having that discussion.

21           COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: I'm sitting in for  
22 a moment for the Chair, but I do think that this  
23 intersection that Council Member Rose is proposing,  
24 which is where, you know, low performing schools or  
25 renewal schools overlap with some of the other, you

1  
2 know, creative models we're talking about here today  
3 might well make sense to think about how one would  
4 look at them. That's certainly not going to be the  
5 case everywhere, but there might be some promising  
6 opportunities. Thank you, Council Member Rose. Next  
7 up is Council Member Peter Koo. Then he'll be  
8 followed by Council Member Gentile.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Thank you. I want to  
10 thank the panel that's here for testifying before us.  
11 I'm here to talk about Reso Number 442. We all know  
12 specialized high school are specialized. I think  
13 most of us in this audience if we were asked to take  
14 the test we wouldn't pass. But this is a special  
15 high school. They design specially for high  
16 achievers. Well, for people who want to go be  
17 scientists or in healthcare related engineering, all  
18 those fields. So, while I was sitting here next to  
19 Council Member Williams, I recall an episode I saw on  
20 channel 13 many, many years ago about the rise of the  
21 Williams sisters, the tennis players. Remember Venus  
22 and Serena Williams? On channel 13, it was many,  
23 many years ago. Based on how the Williams get into  
24 play tennis. One day they were on vacation somewhere  
25 in a motel room. The Williams father was watching TV



1 about US Open, about--and then he find out, wow, if  
2 you won in US Open you can win a couple million  
3 dollars. This is amazing, he said to himself. I  
4 better train my daughters to play tennis. He,  
5 himself, was not a tennis player. So he went out all  
6 the way, spent a lot of time, every weekend took the  
7 two daughters, go to tennis fields to play tennis.  
8 And later on, they found a coach to help the two  
9 sisters to train sisters, and eventually they the  
10 stars. Why did I tell this story? Because the story  
11 behind is, the moral is we have to prepare for  
12 anything you want to do. And you have to be  
13 involved, the parents. As a little kid, they don't  
14 know. I mean, they go to play tennis and they're  
15 three or four years old, right? So, as--we have to  
16 get the parents involved, you know, for their  
17 children's success. Council Member Weprin said  
18 before people in his neighborhood prepare kids to go  
19 to the special high school, because by going to  
20 special prep schools even when you are three or four  
21 years old. He say it was a disadvantage for other  
22 kids. No, I think this is a fair playing field. Why  
23 would parents spend their own money to let their  
24 children go to academy to learn? I mean, it's not  
25

1 the government money. Their hard earned money.  
2 Rather than going on vacations, they go to special  
3 schools. So, my point to all, all of you all is we  
4 have to involve more parents, and then we have to  
5 inform the parents we have such high school in New  
6 York City, and then we have to inform them in life we  
7 all have 24 hours a day no matter how much money you  
8 have or how much you don't have. So we all have to  
9 make choices. Choices are not easy. Some people  
10 choose to sacrifice time studying. Come people  
11 choose to play basketball. Then they become  
12 basketball stars, the NBA players. Some people  
13 choose to become musicians. They practice the violin  
14 or piano all day long. Specialized high school is a  
15 profession. You have to practice, practice,  
16 practice to get in. So what my story is, encourage  
17 all the parents we have such high school in New York  
18 City. They're very good schools. They're the top  
19 schools in the nation, and we don't want to lower the  
20 standard by eliminating the test. The test is not  
21 discriminatory. If it's discriminatory, if it's  
22 racially discriminatory, how come second generations  
23 of immigrants can get in? I mean, people from India,  
24 from Caribbean, they have dark skin. They get in.  
25

1  
2 It's because they spent time in preparation. So, I  
3 want to know how are you guys doing informing the  
4 students or the parents of the students to prepare  
5 them to make sure they have equal opportunities to  
6 take the test and all these things? Can you answer  
7 those?

8 [applause]

9 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: As Chair Dromm  
10 has said, you're welcome to use your enthusiastic  
11 fingers, but we try to keep the spontaneous outbreaks  
12 of applause to a minimum here. Thank you.

13 URSULINA RAMIREZ: I'll let my colleague  
14 Ainsley discuss specifically some of the outreach  
15 that we do to parents, but I do want to mention that  
16 Chancellor Farina has placed, you know, parent  
17 engagement as one of her four pillars and has talked  
18 about it immensely, and we are doing--we are doing a  
19 lot of workshops and outreach on how we get more  
20 students to take the test and more parents involved  
21 in their child's education, but I'll let Ainsley talk  
22 about the specifics.

23 AINSLEY RUDOLFO: In terms of outreach,  
24 all our outreach are to parents. You know, we don't  
25 do outreach to middle schoolers, right? Parents make

1  
2 the decision for middle schoolers. So when we do  
3 outreach, even if it's through the school, we direct  
4 schools to reach out to parents, guidance counselors,  
5 principals. When we do direct outreach it's to  
6 parents. So we are fully engaging parents. There  
7 are some districts, as I said earlier, that we need  
8 to do a better job at for whatever reason and we are  
9 looking at those district. We are, you know, going  
10 deeper into those districts and really seeing what we  
11 need to do to enhance our outreach to parents, but  
12 all our outreach are to parents.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Thank you. Next  
14 up is Council Member Gentile followed by Council  
15 Members Williams and then Treyger.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Thank you, Mr.  
17 Chairman. I want to refer to Reso 442, and if you  
18 look at some of the specialized high schools and  
19 those who attend that are economically disadvantaged,  
20 by that I mean those who are qualified for reduced or  
21 free lunch under title one, if you look at  
22 Stuyvesant, Bronx Science and Brooklyn Tech, about 60  
23 percent of those student bodies in total are  
24 qualifying under title one for free or reduced lunch.  
25 So, we have those poor families in those schools, the

1 students are going to those schools. Now, we have--  
2 if we were to change to a multiple criteria  
3 admissions policy at those schools, wouldn't you  
4 agree that those bright students then would be put at  
5 a disadvantage if those students you would assume are  
6 working to help the family, the poor family make  
7 their budget every month, that if that's the case and  
8 they don't have time for these extracurriculars or  
9 other things, but otherwise would get into a school  
10 based on a single exam, wouldn't--are we now putting  
11 those students at a disadvantage if we were to change  
12 to a multiple admissions criteria?  
13

14 ROBERT SANFT: I don't know that we would  
15 necessarily be putting them at a disadvantage. I  
16 think it would depend on the criteria that was  
17 selected and how they were weighted, and that's  
18 analysis that we would have to do in conversation  
19 that we would--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: [interposing] We  
21 could kind of guess what that criteria would be,  
22 right?

23 ROBERT SANFT: I mean, there are specific  
24 criteria referenced in the State and Assembly bills,  
25 but ultimately we would need to discuss within DOE

1  
2 and within communities what the weighting of that  
3 looks like. Probably first and foremost to look at  
4 how we don't disadvantage specific students, given  
5 that the goal of this is specifically to level the  
6 playing field.

7 AINSLEY RUDOLFO: I think the follow-up,  
8 the goal--this issue with multiple criteria is we  
9 have to careful about subjectivity that we--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: [interposing]  
11 Can you speak into the mic, please?

12 AINSLEY RUDOLFO: That we don't include  
13 any subjectivity into it, right? Because then you  
14 have an individual making a decision on a particular  
15 multiple criteria, and that may come kind of fuzzy.  
16 So, as Rob said, it really depends on what are the  
17 criteria you're looking at.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Right.

19 AINSLEY RUDOLFO: As we do that.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Well, if--that's  
21 interesting you say that, because a recent city  
22 comptroller's audit indicated that the schools that  
23 use multiple criteria, the possibility, and this is  
24 from the report, the possibility of inappropriate  
25 manipulation of student ranking, favoritism or fraud

1  
2 could not be ruled out, and that's what you're saying  
3 you're trying to avoid, but they're saying that in  
4 fact that could happen. In fact, the comptroller  
5 indicated that several of the schools that they  
6 looked at failed to rank a portion of the applicants,  
7 up to a third in some case of the applicants weren't  
8 even ranked in the admissions process. Those  
9 students never had a chance to get in under multiple  
10 criteria. So, in--wouldn't you agree, then, that the  
11 sole criteria of the test actually increases the--  
12 shows no lack, there's no bias, no favoritism, and  
13 frankly is more transparent, because if you take the  
14 test you'll either get in or not, but if you submit  
15 to one of the multiple criteria schools, there's no  
16 guarantee we'll even be ranked or considered as the  
17 comptroller has indicated.

18           URSULINA RAMIREZ: I want to touch--there  
19 are pros and cons to whatever decision is made on how  
20 we do this work. So, I want to just call that out  
21 because I do think that, you know, as we look--we are  
22 looking both nationally and doing a lot of research  
23 on what is the best method to implement both exams  
24 and programs and the admissions. So I want to say  
25 that we're just doing a lot of research on that right

1  
2 now and that there are--there's risks in any decision  
3 that we make for both pieces.

4 ROBERT SANFT: I also think in response  
5 to the schools that use multiple measures right now,  
6 part of the outcome of that audit was that we would  
7 start to collect the rubrics for these schools so  
8 that we could hold them more accountable to who they  
9 are ranking and what the outcomes are with respect to  
10 how they are ranking their applicant pool.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: So, okay. So,  
12 basically it proves, it underscores the point that  
13 there's really no criteria for the multiple criteria  
14 admissions. Some could be ranked. Some couldn't be  
15 ranked. Some could be considered. Some wouldn't be,  
16 are not being considered right now. You're saying  
17 that should change, but right now that's the way it  
18 exists.

19 ROBERT SANFT: What I'm saying is much  
20 like a lot of this, we have a way to go to improve  
21 and we try to do that annually, and we'll look at how  
22 we can ensure that our screened and auditioned  
23 programs are ranking according to their rubrics and  
24 ensuring that we're adhering to what the outcomes of  
25 the audit were.



1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Thank you, Mr.  
3 Chairman.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Council  
5 Member Williams followed by Treyger, Maisel, Barron,  
6 and Levin.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you, Mr.  
8 Chair. Thank you for the testimony. You can only  
9 get so much done in four minutes, so I'm going to try  
10 to save the world in four minutes. But I did want to  
11 say, one, I'm very glad we're having this  
12 conversation as we're nationally discussing a lot of  
13 conversations right now. They seem to be solely  
14 focused on police reform, which is very important,  
15 but there are reforms in multiple institutions that  
16 we have to deal with to really get to the heart of  
17 the problem, and if we don't, we're going to miss the  
18 boat on this moment. So I'm glad that we're having  
19 these discussions, but thank you for the work as was  
20 mentioned that you've already been doing. It's more  
21 than, I think, the last administration, definitely  
22 the dialogue, but still I think we're not doing  
23 enough. I think your own data says 68 percent are  
24 black and Hispanic, 80 percent are eligible for  
25 lunch, and I know we said it's a national problem,

1 but New York City should be leading the way. If 68  
2 percent of the people are black and Latino, 80  
3 percent of the people are eligible for free lunch,  
4 then those are the people that we should be serving  
5 the most. Unfortunately, those the people we are  
6 serving the least, and that's very unfortunate to me,  
7 so we have to. And then, we always--I have no  
8 problem saying that I'm concerned about everybody,  
9 particularly black and Latino. We have a problem.  
10 We have--some people get nervous when we talk about  
11 the solution in terms of race, but we have no problem  
12 discussing the problem in terms of race. So I hear  
13 all the time about black on black crime and all the  
14 issues in those communities, but the minute we talk  
15 about solving those very same problems with solutions  
16 that include targeting race, everybody jumps up and  
17 down, which doesn't really make any sense to me. So  
18 I'm glad we're talking about this right now. And  
19 also, I graduated from Brooklyn Tech. It's hard to  
20 see, but I used to be a black teenager. I also--

22 [laughter]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Single parent.  
24 I had Tourette's Syndrome and ADHD, so what concerns  
25 me and I understand we have to get to the diversity,

1 but some of the solutions that are being suggested, I  
2 don't know gets to that. Because I look at some of  
3 the data with the multiple criteria such as Townsend,  
4 Bard [sic], Eleanor, Beacon, Lab School for  
5 Collaborative Studies, they are actually whiter and  
6 wealthier than some of the testing schools. And so  
7 what concerns me that we're not getting to the core  
8 of the problem, even if we use multiple criteria. In  
9 addition, a lot of that diversity is with the Asian  
10 population, which is good, but not with the Latino  
11 and black population, particularly with the Latino  
12 population. Black and Latino population  
13 unfortunately or fortunately is actually low on both,  
14 90 percent on one, 60 percent on the other, and so my  
15 question is, entrance points--by the way, I think you  
16 said all of the schools give quality education.  
17 That's probably not true. If it was true, we  
18 probably wouldn't be here because everybody would be  
19 getting quality education at any school that they  
20 went to. But, my question is, access points to the  
21 education because people learn and communicate what  
22 they've learned differently. If I was trying to get  
23 into a multiple criteria school, I would not have got  
24 in because my grades were pretty bad, and I often had  
25

1  
2 issues in the classroom. So, the only thing that  
3 actually got me into these schools was testing. That  
4 was the only thing I was good at, testing, Regents  
5 and all the other stuff I could get tested. I had  
6 good recall and the answer was there in the multiple  
7 choice, so that was very easy. So, the--but so for  
8 me, does it make sense to have schools where people  
9 can use what they can do best? So, not all of these  
10 specialized schools and not all of these gifted  
11 schools test in. Some are multiple criteria. Some  
12 are tested. Does it make sense to have access to  
13 those two points? And why is the multiple criteria  
14 schools still not yielding the kind of diversity that  
15 we would like to see?

16 ROBERT SANFT: It's a very interesting  
17 question, Council Member. I think there are a lot of  
18 things that contribute to how individual families  
19 rank and choose their schools based on student  
20 interest, based on family interest, based on  
21 geography and transportation corridors, based on  
22 academic quality of the schools, based on academic  
23 history of the student, based on interest in the  
24 specialized high school versus a non-specialized high  
25 school. So it is a very interesting question and

1  
2 something we'd be very interested in exploring with  
3 you.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Sounds like you  
5 don't really know.

6 ROBERT SANFT: Why certain families are  
7 choosing specific schools?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Yeah. I mean,  
9 I think we do understand that certain families  
10 individually value different things, and each of the  
11 outcomes of our conversations during workshops and  
12 during counseling sessions with families, but it,  
13 again, it's not a one-size fits all model.

14 Individual families are choosing for themselves.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: And my time is  
16 up, I know, but I had a second question which I  
17 didn't hear a response. Does it make sense to have  
18 schools or multiple entrance points to the more  
19 quality education that have different test how you  
20 learn better? So some might be tested, and some  
21 might be multiple criteria. Some might be something  
22 else, does that make sense?

23 ROBERT SANFT: I think looking at how  
24 schools weight their criteria and whether or not they  
25 can be flexible in that waiting is something that is

1 definitely interesting to explore, but I think it is  
2 counterbalanced by how we are or attempt to be  
3 transparent with families about households who are  
4 actually considering individual students to ensure  
5 that they understand fully what it is that the school  
6 is considering when they are considering that  
7 particular student.  
8

9 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you, Mr.  
10 Chair. I mean, it's definitely an issue. I know  
11 that, actually Brooklyn Tech where I went is less  
12 diverse now than it was when I went. So, that's  
13 definitely a problem that we have to address, and I  
14 want to make sure that we don't try to do quick fixes  
15 and get to the problem, but actually get to the core  
16 of the problem. So thank you very much.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Council  
18 Member Treyger?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Thank you,  
20 Chair, and I thank you for holding this very  
21 important hearing. My question is, looking at these  
22 six racially isolated districts, do you have data  
23 with you today that says how many schools in these  
24 districts have certified career technical education  
25 programs?

1  
2 URSULINA RAMIREZ: We do not have that  
3 data here today, but we can get back to you.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: I would  
5 appreciate that data. I appreciate that data  
6 actually for all of our schools, out of the 1,700 how  
7 many of them have certified CTE programs. Let me  
8 explain why this matters. And I speak as a proud  
9 former public school teacher as well. One of the  
10 shortcomings in the DOE has been the push to apply  
11 real life learning application in our school system,  
12 and CTE opens those doors. I don't believe middle  
13 schoolers wake up in the seventh, eighth grade and  
14 say, "I feel like going to Stuyvesant." This is  
15 something that is embedded in them through earlier  
16 years and elementary school years, obviously with  
17 family support, obviously with community support and  
18 school support. And many of the feeder schools pay  
19 attention to the fact that--and what I appreciate  
20 about schools like Brooklyn Tech and Stuyvesant is  
21 that they teach to the whole of the child, not just  
22 simply academics. There's engineering, technical  
23 education, computers, art, music, you name it. But if  
24 we are not providing our kids at the earliest ages  
25 possible and exposing them to real life application

1  
2 of learning at elementary grade school grades, then  
3 it is the system, not the test, that this failing  
4 these children. That is the issue. And I'm very  
5 sensitive to when people say if you're not a  
6 specialized school, then you're not special. I was a  
7 graduate of Murrow High School. I'm very proud of  
8 that. I was a teacher at New Utrecht High school.  
9 We had some great programs that I'm very proud of.  
10 But understand, that when you do not provide the  
11 support to schools at the earliest grades possible to  
12 expose our kids to real life application of learning,  
13 then this problem is systemic. And I also take issue  
14 with the fact whoever controls the levers of  
15 measurement controls the discussion of what's  
16 performing and what's not performing. So we have  
17 kids, amazing kids in southern Brooklyn who are  
18 building homes, who are programming on computers, but  
19 the DOE historically has labeled them failures, and I  
20 take issue with that. So the issue is, and with all  
21 due respect, the greatest challenges in our school  
22 system do not reside in the hallways of Brooklyn Tech  
23 and Stuyvesant. It resides at the policy making  
24 level, and we have to make sure that we are  
25 addressing these inequities and this perpetuation of



1  
2 this myth of failing schools when in reality we've  
3 been subjected to a failing system. And how do we  
4 duplicate the success that some schools have had, and  
5 share that across the board. And I asked for that  
6 data out of the 1,700 schools in our system, how many  
7 have certified CTE programs. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. I guess  
9 we'll now be hearing from Council Member Alan Maisel  
10 followed by Barron and Levin. I'm sorry, Council  
11 Member Barron?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you, Mr.  
13 Chair. In your testimony you talked about the DREAM  
14 program that you have. It's a 22 month program, and  
15 you said that 847 students were offered spots as  
16 specialized high schools. How many students were in  
17 the program in its entirety? And you talked about  
18 needing more money to expand the program, so what is  
19 the funding stream, and how much money is that?

20 AINSLEY RUDOLFO: So, since we started  
21 the program, we had a little over about, available  
22 seats about 5,000 available since the life of the  
23 program, right? We've had an average about 1,400 per  
24 year for the program, and the program has been in  
25 existence about four cycles now, so a little over

1  
2 5,000 seats. In terms of who took the test from the  
3 DREAM program, we have about a little over 3,000 plus  
4 kids took the test who attended the full 22 months of  
5 the DREAM program, with the exception of the first  
6 year, which I said was a truncated year. We started  
7 in the seventh grade. So not all kids who are  
8 enrolled finish the program, and not all kids who  
9 finish the program did the test.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So, how many, do  
11 you have the number?

12 AINSLEY RUDOLFO: How many in the program  
13 now?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Yes.

15 AINSLEY RUDOLFO: In the program now we  
16 have 1,450, 1,450 currently sitting in a DREAM active  
17 program now.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And how did you  
19 select the schools for the students to participate,  
20 or how did you select the students?

21 AINSLEY RUDOLFO: So there's a criteria,  
22 but the main criteria of course is a cut-off on the  
23 ELM [sic] fifth grade score and then attendance,  
24 which is about 90 percent for fifth grade are the  
25 main criterias for eligibility.

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Sit down please.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you. And then we go out to the advanced placement program that you have. You said it's for STEM, students interested in STEM and for students who are under-represented and underserved. How did you target the schools? You indicated there were 64 high schools throughout the city. How did you target those high schools, and can you give us a list of what those schools are?

AINSLEY RUDOLFO: Yeah. So, just before into the AP program, I'm assuming you made the assumption that all the kids in DREAM are free and reduced lunch and are--

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing] I didn't make that assumption.

AINSLEY RUDOLFO: Well, they all are title one kids.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay.

AINSLEY RUDOLFO: In terms of the AP expansion, we basically looked at districts that had little or no STEM AP courses. So we did a look at the entire city, looked at what schools where they were clustered in particular districts that had at

1  
2 least one or no STEM AP, and invited those schools to  
3 participate in the AP expansion project.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And what has been  
5 the success? You've talked about the increase in the  
6 number of students that took the test, that took the  
7 AP exams. What has been the increase in the number  
8 of students who passed?

9 AINSLEY RUDOLFO: It's been a mixed  
10 batch. So, we saw success in terms of participation  
11 and in terms of performance, we didn't lose any  
12 ground in that usually the general prevailing idea is  
13 as more kids take the AP test, you would see a  
14 reduction in performance. The performance remained  
15 flat, but we then see an uptick in kids passing,  
16 particularly the STEM subjects.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So what is--was  
18 it an AP class that you instituted at the high school  
19 itself, where students now had an instructor who  
20 trained them, who prepared them for the AP?

21 AINSLEY RUDOLFO: Right.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: You added a  
23 class?

24 AINSLEY RUDOLFO: We added classes. We  
25 added courses at the participating high schools.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And finally, what  
3 are the various methods that are currently used for  
4 high school admissions across the city?

5 ROBERT SANFT: We're talking about the  
6 admissions methods for each of the schools or the  
7 programs within the schools?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Yes, across the  
9 city.

10 ROBERT SANFT: There are nine of them,  
11 and so screen for academics, audition, screened for  
12 language, educational option. There's a limited  
13 unscreened, zoned and the specialized high school  
14 test.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And Mr. Chair, if  
16 you would indulge me, the shared path to success  
17 that's for students with disabilities and there's a  
18 set aside for each of the high schools across the  
19 city so that they could be a part of that, is that  
20 correct?

21 ROBERT SANFT: Correct. It is reflective  
22 of the borough percentage for those students within  
23 the boroughs where the schools are located.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you.  
25

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Council Member Levin?

And we'll have a second round from Lander, Weprin, Rose, and Williams.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you to this panel. I want to thank you very much. I apologize for not being here during your testimony, but I want to thank you for the shout out in regard to PS 133, and I want to just acknowledge the work of the CEC's that they played in that process. David Goldsmith is here from CEC 13, and it was a joint venture that the CEC's along with my office and DOE had, and what was interesting about that process with PS 133, which we eventually came to a place where we have an admissions process that's going to promote diversity in an affirmative way. That took a lot of candid discussion between the various interested parties, and we talked about these issues in a thorough way and in way that was straight up with each other, and we did not pull any punches and it was like a robust conversation that happened over a course of several years and that was for one specific schools. And it wasn't always the easiest process and at times it was somewhat painful, but we felt like we got to a place

1  
2 that is a good place to be in and could serve as a  
3 good model for the rest of the city in a lot ways,  
4 and so I want to just acknowledge their hard work on  
5 that and point you to the work that the CEC in  
6 district 13 has been doing now over the last few  
7 months, because they're taking that process and  
8 they're looking at how to address the issues of  
9 segregation throughout that district using this as a  
10 model. So, I just want to acknowledge their hard  
11 work and kind of point everybody towards the good  
12 work that they've been doing. With regard to Intro  
13 442, I just wanted to ask, and this might have been  
14 covered already, in all of the universities, you  
15 know, top universities in the country both private  
16 and public, do any of them use just the SAT as an  
17 admissions criteria? Is there a single major  
18 university, Harvard, Yale, Stanford on the private  
19 side, Berkley, or Chapel Hill, or University of  
20 Michigan on the public side that just uses the SAT's  
21 as a single criteria for admission?

22 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Based on our research,  
23 no.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay. And do  
25 those schools, Harvard, Yale, Stanford, Berkley,

1 Michigan, Chapel Hill, the best public, the best  
2 private schools in the country, MIT, Cal Pack [sic],  
3 do any of them, do they suffer as a result? I mean,  
4 has it been a positive, a net positive for them to  
5 expand their admissions criteria so it's not based on  
6 a single standardized test?  
7

8 URSULINA RAMIREZ: I can't--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing] You  
10 don't have to speak for them--

11 URSULINA RAMIREZ: speak for the  
12 universities. I'm sure they would say no.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Right. I mean,  
14 it's become the norm throughout our education system,  
15 our higher education system, that we look at various  
16 criteria for admission to these, you know, venerated  
17 institutions of higher learning, and you know, it's  
18 been a good thing for our universities across the  
19 country that we're looking at--you know, young  
20 people, students are more than just a test score, and  
21 I think that we as a city need to acknowledge that,  
22 and it seems like it's the appropriate thing to do at  
23 this point. To me, it seems like this is an  
24 antiquated system that would reduce our students to  
25 merely one test score on one day, and so I'm in



1 support of 442, and I would like to see my colleagues  
2 vote for this. I think it's a step in the right  
3 direction. So I just wanted to, you know, make sure  
4 that it's--this is bringing us into the norm, not  
5 bringing us outside of the norm. Thank you.

6  
7 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Thank you.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you very  
9 much, Mr. Chair.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Council  
11 Member Lander?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you, Mr.  
13 Chair, for making a second round possible. Two  
14 hopefully quick questions. You mentioned in the  
15 testimony, educational option high schools as a good  
16 model which used academic achievement, that are  
17 specifically designed to have diverse, students of  
18 diverse academic achievement who apply to those  
19 schools, and that produces in many cases diverse  
20 schools across the range of criteria that you were  
21 looking at earlier. Do you know how many roughly  
22 there are out of our high schools?

23 ROBERT SANFT: I actually might know that  
24 off the top of my head if you give me one moment. It  
25 makes up 21 percent of our schools and program at the

1  
2 high school level. We only have a couple at the  
3 middle school level if any.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: And it's my  
5 understanding that in the prior administration there  
6 was appetite, you know, for these schools that, you  
7 know, they were ranked well on the, you know, middle  
8 school students applications for high school, but  
9 that there was resistance to creating more of them or  
10 sort of meeting that desire, and that in some cases  
11 there was even a desire to have fewer of them. I  
12 don't have data. This was just a thing I was told,  
13 but I guess I wonder whether you see appetite for  
14 that, because as you rightly said, parents and  
15 families are looking for a wide range of things, that  
16 model. Obviously some people who are here are  
17 looking for, you know, and elite high school with the  
18 best possible students in it. The families applying  
19 to educational option high schools are looking for an  
20 option that's got a diverse range of students. As  
21 Council Member Treyger points out, there's people  
22 who want schools that emphasize, you know, CTE. We  
23 can, you know, go on and on, but I just--that's a  
24 model in which people hungry for diversity would  
25 presumably choose, and so I just wonder whether you

1  
2 have some sense of, you know, of who's, you know,  
3 what the volume of people seeking to be in those  
4 schools are and how we're meeting that demand.

5 ROBERT SANFT: Alright. We can  
6 definitely pull demand data for you for our  
7 educational option programs in schools. While, I  
8 think the last administration focused largely on  
9 opening schools with a limited unscreened admissions  
10 method, absolutely, we would be open to exploring  
11 additional educational option schools, which to your  
12 point is that much more of the diversity  
13 conversation, academic diversity in addition to  
14 racial, ethnic diversity of our students with  
15 disabilities, language, culture.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: And this gets out  
17 what I hope the intro will show as well. It makes  
18 intuitive sense. You would get more diversity in  
19 educational option models versus limited unscreened  
20 models. I don't know. I'd like to see the data and  
21 understand it better together and see what we could  
22 do to build on it. So, thank you. And then my final  
23 question is just about the support schools need to  
24 succeed if they're diverse, and this gets in some  
25 ways to Council Member Treyger's issue of just

1  
2 providing strong supports where they're needed to  
3 every school, but I think it also makes intuitive  
4 sense that it's in certain ways easier to educate a  
5 homogenous group of students and that more is needed  
6 to support a diverse and heterogeneous group of  
7 students. You need people who speak more languages.  
8 You need to be able to pay attention to a broader set  
9 of learners. If you're paying attention to English  
10 language learners and students with disabilities, you  
11 need to provide the resources, whether those are  
12 teaching or physical instruction or support or  
13 transportation or outreach to make all of that work.  
14 And I hope there'll be, I wonder if there is and I'll  
15 hope there'll be some reflection as you think about  
16 these issues on not only the admissions policies  
17 which are critical, but on the supports needed to  
18 enable schools to succeed as well, which something  
19 I've heard a lot from the parents and advocates in  
20 those schools afterwards.

21                   URSULINA RAMIREZ: And just really  
22 quickly, I think the chancellor would agree, and you  
23 know, with our announcement of our new superintendent  
24 in addition to the some of the expansion of our  
25 professional development teams in addition to our

1  
2 expansion of our English language learners  
3 department, we're doing our best to make sure that  
4 there is targeted interventions and supports for  
5 particular needs in schools.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, Council Member  
8 Weprin followed by Rose, and then we'll wrap it up  
9 with Council Member Williams.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: So, I know that  
11 most people in this room know this, but just in case  
12 people watching don't know, when a child takes the  
13 standardized high school exam, specialized high  
14 school exam, they have to rank the schools in order  
15 of preference for which one they would want. So if a  
16 kid wanted to go to the Brooklyn Latin School as  
17 their first choice and put it first, they would get  
18 that if they ranked high enough to make it into  
19 Brooklyn Latin. They, even if they ranked high  
20 enough to get into Stuyvesant, they wouldn't have the  
21 option of going to Stuyvesant, they would go to  
22 Brooklyn Latin as their first choice. That's  
23 correct, right?

24 ROBERT SANFT: Correct.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Do you have the  
3 statistics by race of which schools the students list  
4 and in what order they list them?

5 ROBERT SANFT: We would have to get back  
6 to you on that, Council Member. I would have to take  
7 a look.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: That seems like an  
9 important piece of information, because let me--where  
10 I represent a large Asian population. That's not--  
11 that's according to census. And no doubt in mind  
12 that most of those Asian families are listing  
13 Stuyvesant first. Many are looking at Bronx Science  
14 first. As a matter of fact, a lot of them call it  
15 the Stuy test. I hear that from a lot of my friends  
16 who have kids going there and they call it the Stuy  
17 test. So, overwhelmingly, you know, that's what their  
18 first choice is. I would be curious to see, you know,  
19 this is just anecdotal, but I did do open house  
20 circuit on these things, and at Lehman College  
21 Academy of American Studies or American Studies at  
22 Lehman, it didn't seem to be as popular with the  
23 Asian parents, just as I'll just be looking around  
24 the room as Bronx Science was or Stuyvesant was. So  
25 that, I think is an important statistic because

1 obviously that might be another factor here that's  
2 driving this. If you look in Brooklyn, you might put  
3 Brooklyn Tech first. You might put Brooklyn Latin  
4 first and not want to travel up to the Bronx. I  
5 mean, those are factors I think are important,  
6 because we're dealing here with a science. We  
7 understand the problem. And Council Member Jumaane,  
8 I would have kissed him if was sitting next to him,  
9 because he made a great point, because the additional  
10 criteria that was cited here earlier where, you know,  
11 we bring GPA, test scores, attendance in, and I don't  
12 think we have any idea whether that would help. We  
13 don't know if that even would help up black and  
14 Latino students. The problem is we don't have enough  
15 black and Latino students going to certain  
16 specialized high schools. So, he made a point that  
17 there are schools that have these additional criteria  
18 already that are still overwhelmingly white. So, we  
19 don't know--my big beef here is, we are trying to  
20 address a problem by just looking at the results  
21 without figuring out what the problem is, and the  
22 very first thing we need to do before we do this  
23 dramatic thing, which a lot of people seem very  
24 sensitive about. People have been going to these  
25

1 schools for many years, including my father-in-law  
2 who's been driving me crazy on this one issue, that  
3 they want to know--like, make sure that whatever  
4 solution we come up with actually works. You know,  
5 that would be the nice thing to start, and that's why  
6 I say--my initial testimony, my initial question was  
7 the idea of you mandate that they take the test.  
8 More kids take the test who are black and Latino, get  
9 that number higher, you're going to get more kids  
10 into those schools. I think that works. If you were  
11 to give more test prep, test prep helps. Like it or  
12 not, test prep helps, and a lot of kids in other  
13 communities are not getting it enough, outside of  
14 school or inside of school, wherever you want to do  
15 it, but that will help, those numbers. Those are two  
16 positive steps, but without knowing whether they're  
17 asking to go to Stuyvesant and not knowing where  
18 they're actually listing as choices and not knowing  
19 what's making them not take the test, and then who's  
20 letting--where are they falling on the criteria, too?  
21 Is there a disproportionate amount of black and  
22 Latinos just missing the cut-offs? Because that  
23 would be significant if that was true. I don't know  
24 that to be true or not. Then, you give them a little  
25



1  
2 bonus for something else, maybe that makes sense, but  
3 we may be looking and that's not even true. I don't  
4 know. So, we got to know first before we start  
5 making major changes. That's my point. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. And  
7 Council Member Rose has agreed to allow Council  
8 Member Williams to speak before here. Then she will  
9 go and then--[off mic] [laughter] Then Council Member  
10 Levin also has a follow-up.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you,  
12 Council Member Rose. Thank you to the Chair. One  
13 thing I wanted to mention, I wanted to piggy back on  
14 what Council Member Treyger was saying, just in case  
15 there are any students and people listening that they  
16 understand that if they apply themselves they can  
17 learn in the public schools system. Sometimes we  
18 talk about this and don't realize the effect it may  
19 be having on young people who are hearing all this  
20 doom and gloom, but I want to make sure they  
21 understand that they have an opportunity to get a  
22 very good education if they pay attention and apply  
23 themselves. Also, so I know one of my colleagues was  
24 talking about college and universities, but one of  
25 the issues there, I think, CUNY, which has its own

1  
2 problems, but I think one of the successes there is  
3 there are a lot of access points depending on how you  
4 learn and what you can do. And so I think--I don't  
5 know if the college is the best example. And I got  
6 into Brooklyn College solely because of my SAT score.  
7 Again, I get concerned because I want to make sure  
8 that people like me will have an opportunity. So, I  
9 probably, not to disparage special education, but  
10 most black young people who have the issues I had get  
11 steered there, and if it wasn't for my mother, that's  
12 probably what would have happened. And so whether it  
13 was going to the junior high school or going into  
14 Brooklyn Tech, it was a test that saved me. So all  
15 these problems, I was always fidgety, couldn't pay  
16 attention in class, very noisy. Not much has  
17 changed, but I've been able to kind of hone that into  
18 a skill set that I think makes sense. So, I still  
19 get worried about taking this away completely, as was  
20 mentioned, without having the right combination,  
21 because we still haven't answered why the multiple  
22 criteria schools aren't yielding the results that we  
23 want still. This is not to get away from the  
24 diversity in the schools, and I believe if those  
25 schools, specialized high schools don't come up with

1 a plan themselves, we are going to have to definitely  
2 do something. And also, I think we have to pay  
3 attention to the fact that the education received in  
4 some of these young people in some of these schools  
5 up until they take the test are wanting, and that's  
6 one of the problems here. And so, we can't pretend  
7 like that's not a problem and we have to figure out  
8 how to address that as well. I know that I got a  
9 comprehensive plan from the specialized high school  
10 alumni organizations. Have you seen that plan? Did  
11 you have any response to the plan?  
12

13 ROBERT SANFT: Seen the plan--

14 URSULINA RAMIREZ: I have not seen the  
15 plan.

16 ROBERT SANFT: I have not seen the plan.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, well I'm  
18 hoping that the folks out there who represent a  
19 specialized high school alumni associations will get  
20 that to them. We really do have a problem, but I  
21 want to make sure everybody has an access point, and  
22 mine was the test. And I think it--I think it would  
23 be different if those were the only schools that  
24 provided a very good quality education, but we have a  
25 list of other schools that also do that you can get a

1  
2 very good quality education, that already have  
3 multiple measures. And so, I just can't get past  
4 that, that we have these different access points for  
5 different folks and both of them are not working.  
6 So, that is one reasoning that I haven't been able to  
7 get past to support the measure that's before us, but  
8 the issue is very real, and we need to do something  
9 about it. And thank you, Chair, for that. I  
10 appreciate it.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Council  
12 Member Rose.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: I just wanted to  
14 ask you if the gifted and talented programs in our  
15 elementary schools are deemed a part of the pipeline  
16 in terms of preparation for our students to be ready  
17 and prepared to go to specialized high schools?

18 ROBERT SANFT: I don't think that we've  
19 ever considered them specifically a pipeline to our  
20 specialized high schools. It's just another form of  
21 instruction that many parents and families covet and  
22 historically they've been implemented throughout the  
23 city.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: But do you think  
25 that, you know, they're early access to a program

1  
2 such as gifted and talented raises their ability to  
3 qualify for specialized high schools?

4 ROBERT SANFT: I think high quality  
5 instruction is of paramount importance for all of our  
6 students. I think that to the point that was made  
7 earlier, we have to improve school quality throughout  
8 the city. I would imagine that from one gifted and  
9 talented program within a school to another, there is  
10 some variation in the quality of the instruction that  
11 the children are receiving and ultimately the  
12 outcomes for those students. I think it's something  
13 that we need to look at.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Because we've  
15 talked an awful lot about preparation, begin prepared  
16 is one of the values that prepare, you know, make  
17 sure that our students can sort of qualify for a  
18 specialized high schools. And I'm wondering about  
19 opportunity. We were talking about diversity and I  
20 find that the gifted and talented programs are often  
21 not in schools where the, you would call, racially  
22 isolated schools, and so I was wondering if there's  
23 some correlation and if there's something that can be  
24 looked at in terms of gifted and talented. I know in  
25 my district I don't have any gifted and talented

1  
2 programs, and we had to fight to try to keep one, and  
3 that too was moved to the other side of the island.  
4 And so, I feel like the students in my district are  
5 not being given the opportunity to have access to  
6 that level of education or preparation. And so, when  
7 we look at diversity and zoning preparation and  
8 academic achievement, I think they're all tied in, in  
9 that there needs to be some sort of barometer by  
10 which all schools can have a fair shake at this. You  
11 know, I'm tired of my schools in my district not  
12 being prepared to compete, and I think that, you  
13 know, there's a lot of elements that go into that in  
14 terms of zoning, in terms of access programs,  
15 opportunity programs, gifted and talented starting,  
16 you know, very early on, and the fact that a  
17 principal can determine whether or not she's going  
18 to, he or she is going to have the option to provide  
19 preparation for a test like that. Is that something  
20 that the principal looks at only in terms of her  
21 budget?

22 ROBERT SANFT: Are we talking about gifted  
23 and talented or the specialized high school  
24 admissions--

25

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: [interposing] Now,  
3 I'm talking about the preparation for--

4 ROBERT SANFT: [interposing] that Ainsley  
5 was referencing--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: [interposing]  
7 specialized high school. You were telling us earlier  
8 that the principal has the right to determine whether  
9 or not they would provide preparation for the test.  
10 So,--

11 AINSLEY RUDOLFO: [interposing] A big  
12 piece of it would be budget priorities.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: is this a budget-  
14 driven decision?

15 AINSLEY RUDOLFO: Not entirely, but a  
16 piece of it would be budget-driven, and of course, in  
17 terms of values and instruction, I'm sure all our  
18 principals want our kids to excel, and you know, but  
19 part of it would be budgeted.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: But then shouldn't  
21 it be that budget not be an issue for the principal,  
22 that if we're talking about providing a quality and  
23 equal type of education for everyone, that budget  
24 should not be a part of that equation? Because  
25 you're now telling me that budget has something to do

1  
2 with the quality or the ability for a school to  
3 provide the preparation that might make the  
4 difference between a student being able to qualify  
5 for a specialized high school or not.

6           URSULINA RAMIREZ: I just wanted to  
7 comment. I mean, we do have, obviously principals  
8 have an option in prioritizing their budget to have  
9 these kind of programs, but because we have the DREAM  
10 program which is centralized and it is free for all  
11 students, we think there is an option that families  
12 can utilize.

13           COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: I'm sorry, the free  
14 program is available to everyone?

15           AINSLEY RUDOLFO: To those who qualify.

16           COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: To who qualify, and  
17 that's not in their--that wouldn't be in their  
18 school, but there's sort of some off-site free  
19 preparation program?

20           AINSLEY RUDOLFO: It's district based.  
21 It's within particular districts. We have 20 sites  
22 across the city within particular districts.

23           COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Okay. And the  
24 school lets them know that they're qualified to be a  
25 part of that program?



1  
2 AINSLEY RUDOLFO: Central and the  
3 schools. So we communicate directly as we said with  
4 parents through mail in, but we also communicate  
5 directly with guidance counselors and principals. So  
6 there are multiple ways that we let kids know that  
7 they are eligible to participate.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Council  
10 Member Levin?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you, Mr.  
12 Chair. I just have one last follow-up question.  
13 It's along the line of Council Member Rose's  
14 question. Are there--and this may have been covered  
15 before, are there private test prep agencies that  
16 helps students prepare for the specialized exam?

17 AINSLEY RUDOLFO: Yeah, if you pay for  
18 it, you can go to a private place.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: So there is--but  
20 they exist?

21 AINSLEY RUDOLFO: Yeah.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: There's essentially  
23 a--

24 AINSLEY RUDOLFO: [interposing] An  
25 industry of them.

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Sorry?

AINSLEY RUDOLFO: There's an industry out there around--

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing]

There's an industry of test prep, because I-- and that costs money, obviously, right? So, I just--just to share, I mean, when I was preparing to go to college I took a test prep course for the SAT's. My parents paid for it, and it cost a lot of money, and it raised my score about 150 to 200 points, somewhere in that range. And I did better on my college, you know, admission than I would have otherwise, and so I just wanted to--but, so the same type of thing that exists for SAT's exists for the specialized high school exam? Okay, thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you. I think with that, I'm going to say thank you to the Administration for coming in. We're going to move onto our next panel. There remains an awful lot to be discussed. We can't solve all the problems today, and I do thank you for coming and participating in this hearing.

URSULINA RAMIREZ: Thank you, and we look forward to discussing in the future.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Now, I'm going  
3 to call my next panel, State Senator Toby Ann  
4 Stavisky, Assemblyman Jeff Dinowitz, Assemblyman  
5 William Cotto--Colton, and State Committeewoman Nancy  
6 Tong. And we've been joined by Council Member Dan  
7 Garodnick. Thank you for being here. Swear everybody  
8 in, so if you'd raise your right hand, please? Do  
9 you solemnly swear to tell the truth--Do you solemnly  
10 swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth  
11 and nothing but the truth, and to answer Council  
12 Member questions honestly? Okay. Thank you. Senator  
13 Stavisky, should we start with you? [off mic]

14 TOBY ANN STAVISKY: My testimony says  
15 good morning, but I'm glad it's not evening also.  
16 Good morning. Good afternoon, ladies and gentleman.  
17 My name is Toby Stavisky, and I'm a graduate of the  
18 Bronx High School of Science, the mother of a science  
19 graduate and a former teacher at Brooklyn Tech. As a  
20 State Senator, I currently represent many communities  
21 in Queens including Flushing, Elmhurst, Forrest  
22 Hills, Regal [sic] Park, Woodside, Bayside,  
23 Elechester [sic] and Pomenac [sp?], and I'm here  
24 today to speak on two City Council resolutions, 0453  
25 and 0442, which address diversity in our city's

1 public schools. As a lifelong New Yorker and current  
2 representative of some of the most diverse zip codes  
3 in the nation, I feel very strongly that diversity is  
4 our city's greatest asset. This was true when I was  
5 a student at science, when the school drew students  
6 from all five boroughs, rich and poor, native and  
7 immigrant. And today, we are here to address  
8 concerns that the city's specialized high schools do  
9 not fully reflect our city's racial and cultural  
10 diversity. Sadly, this is a serious problem that  
11 applies not only to specialized high schools, but to  
12 many neighborhood schools as well. I am in full  
13 support of Resolution 453, which calls on the  
14 Department of Education to make school diversity a  
15 priority when making decisions on issue such as  
16 admission policies, creating new schools and school  
17 rezoning. I must, however, voice my strong opposition  
18 to Resolution 442, which would eliminate the  
19 specialized high school admissions test and replace  
20 the exam with multiple admission criteria. I believe  
21 that eliminating this test is a short sided solution  
22 to the problem of diversity in our specialized high  
23 schools. Pointing the finger at the SHSAT as the  
24 reason for the lack of diversity in these schools is  
25

1  
2 overly simplistic and ignores the truth. The fact is  
3 black and Latino students are not being failed by a  
4 single test. They are being failed by a system in  
5 which last year only 18.6 percent of black three  
6 through eighth grade students tested proficient in  
7 math, and only 18.1 percent tested proficient in  
8 English. Some argue that replacing the exam with an  
9 admissions system that considers multiple criteria  
10 such as extracurricular activities and  
11 recommendations will help diversify the student  
12 bodies at these schools, but a study of the student  
13 population of specialized high schools that use  
14 multiple criteria reveals that schools that are  
15 actually more white and more wealthy than schools  
16 that use the exam. These deficiencies were also  
17 noted in a report by the New York City Comptroller.  
18 Let's not do away with a rigorous test that for  
19 generations have blindly--the test scorer or the  
20 machine doesn't know the ethnicity of the test taker,  
21 that falsely identified--that fairly identifies the  
22 city's most advanced students. Instead, lets offer  
23 practice SHSAT's so that students can gauge their  
24 performance and prepare for the actual exam. Let's  
25 significantly improve access to universal pre-k to

1  
2 give all children the opportunity to start succeeding  
3 early. Let's create more gifted and talented and  
4 enrichment programs in elementary and middle schools  
5 in black and Latino neighborhoods. Let's provide  
6 free test preparation in schools serving African-  
7 American and Latino communities. Let's grow and  
8 improve the discovery program to include all four  
9 specialized high schools, reconfigure it to target  
10 these minority students on the cusp of eligibility  
11 and give them extra support. Let's improve outreach  
12 programs so that African-American and Latino students  
13 are aware of the opportunities available at  
14 specialized high schools, because as a former high  
15 school teacher, I fervently believe that every child  
16 can learn. I am astounded by the fact that eight  
17 Nobel Laureates graduated from science, more than  
18 many countries. Let's offer all students the  
19 opportunities that those graduates had, and let's  
20 continue the tradition of opportunity for all  
21 regardless of ethnicity, race or religion. Thank  
22 you, Mr. Chairman.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Senator,  
24 and Assemblyman?

25

1  
2 JEFFERY DINOWITZ: Good afternoon. I'm  
3 State Assemblyman Jeffery Dinowitz. I represent the  
4 northwest Bronx, and I am a graduate of the Bronx  
5 High School of Science, and both of my kids made  
6 Bronx High School of Science, and they passed the test  
7 not because their father was an elected official and  
8 not because they had a rich daddy who went there who  
9 could be nice to the school. They passed the test  
10 because they passed the test, and it was an objective  
11 test, and in about 13 years I'm hoping that my son's  
12 two sons will also take the test and pass the test,  
13 and hopefully the Bronx High School of Science will  
14 be the school that it was when I went there and when  
15 my son went there. But let's be clear, there is  
16 something wrong when only 13 percent of the students  
17 of New York City specialized high schools are Latino  
18 or African-American. However, I do not believe that  
19 the problem lies with the specialized high school  
20 admissions test, which the eight specialized high  
21 schools, two of which are in my district, Bronx  
22 Science and the School of American Studies, those  
23 schools use as their only criteria for admission.  
24 The under-representation of some minority populations  
25 in these schools is indicative of much larger set of

1 challenges facing the city's education that does not  
2 begin in eighth grade, but begins in kindergarten and  
3 probably way before kindergarten. Those who advocate  
4 for a more complex admissions process do a disservice  
5 to the students they want to help and to the premise  
6 of objectivity upon which these specialized schools  
7 were founded. Of the hundreds of schools in New York  
8 City and the many, many dozens of high schools, only  
9 eight base their decisions on this particular test.  
10 Though no test is perfect, the SHSAT seeks to be  
11 entirely objective. It is meant to identify New York  
12 City's best and brightest young minds so they can  
13 learn alongside their peers. So, political  
14 influence, athletic prowess, family legacies, money,  
15 none of that plays a role in the admissions exams for  
16 those schools. The myth that the specialized high  
17 schools exist exclusively for the privileged elite is  
18 just that, a myth. According to the Department of  
19 Education statistics, over half the students  
20 currently enrolled in these eight schools are  
21 eligible for free or reduced lunch. A significant  
22 percentage of the schools population are either  
23 immigrants or the children of recent immigrants, and  
24 less than a quarter of the student body is white.  
25



1  
2 Those advocating for additional criteria to determine  
3 admissions want to use standards that are prone to  
4 manipulation and subjectivity such as grades or, if  
5 you can believe it, attendance. And as a Bronxite, I  
6 can tell you that perhaps attendance in some our  
7 schools may not be as good as in other areas because  
8 we have the highest asthma rate of any county in the  
9 state, and using attendance as a criteria can in fact  
10 penalize students in our borough rather than help  
11 them. And while a good attendance record should be  
12 the goal of every student, because qualified  
13 applicants may miss for days for whatever reason,  
14 that should not be what determines whether they get  
15 in. Merely showing up should not be a factor in  
16 determining whether a student is qualified to be in a  
17 specialized high school. To be sure, there are  
18 aspects of this application process that can be  
19 improved and that should be improved. One critique  
20 of the process, which I think is very reasonable, is  
21 that not all students have equal access to prep  
22 classes and tutoring for the SHSAT, and this has to  
23 be changed. Right now, some kids take the prep  
24 classes, some kids don't. Some kids don't even know  
25 about it. I believe that every student should have

1 free test preparatory classes available to them  
2 whenever they want it for as long as they want it,  
3 and that should be available in every single school.  
4 But in addition, the SHSAT is an opt-in test, and  
5 that means that you have to specifically register to  
6 take the test, and what that means is that students  
7 across New York City, including many, many in Latino  
8 and African-American communities do not take the test  
9 or don't even know that the test exists, and many of  
10 the people running the schools in those districts  
11 don't inform them of that. Instead, I believe that  
12 the test should be an opt-out test. Students would  
13 be registered unless he or she chooses not to take  
14 the test, that way many, many more people will take  
15 the test. It should be incumbent upon the Department  
16 of Education to inform every family of the  
17 specialized high schools, because I guarantee you,  
18 many, many people don't even know they exist. They  
19 should be informed of the SHSAT, of the free tutoring  
20 opportunities that should be made available to them.  
21 You know, the eight specialized high schools that use  
22 this test to determine admission are among the best  
23 schools not only in the state, but they've earned  
24 national reputations for excellence, and my own Alma  
25

1  
2 Mater, Bronx Science, as we know, because we like to  
3 say because it's true has eight Nobel Prize winners  
4 amongst their alum. These effective educational  
5 institutions should be cherished and protected. Don't  
6 get me wrong, the non-representative demographics of  
7 these specialized high schools are beyond troubling,  
8 but adjusting the application process to include  
9 factors behind the SHSAT would simply introduce bias  
10 and subjectivity to an objective and fair process.  
11 The free prep class is an opt-out process format  
12 would be big steps forward, and there are other  
13 things we can do to get more people to take the test  
14 and to get more people to be as prepared as possible  
15 for the test, but still, we know the reality is that  
16 these measures are only part of the solution.  
17 Together, we have to work to make sure that our  
18 school system as a whole improves because the truth  
19 is we cannot use what I'd consider simplistic  
20 solutions to a problem, the problem of skewed  
21 demographics. The fact is kids don't just become  
22 better students or poor students in eighth grade.  
23 This starts in Kindergarten or before. Thank  
24 goodness Mayor de Blasio's universal pre-k, which the  
25 state legislature funded is now in effect, but the

1 fact is there are some kids that go into kindergarten  
2 knowing how to read and there are some kids who go  
3 into kindergarten not even knowing their ABCs, and  
4 those kids are going to be a disadvantage for many,  
5 many years to come. So if you really want to resolve  
6 this problem, we have to start resolving that problem  
7 many years before the kids take these tests in eighth  
8 grade. And also, as was shown by the recent study by  
9 Comptroller Scott Stringer, the use of the--the  
10 multiple criteria schools, the possibility, the  
11 strong possibility exists, and I quote, "of  
12 inappropriate manipulation of student ranking,  
13 favoritism and fraud." There is no guarantee that  
14 using multiple criteria will change the results. In  
15 fact, the demographics in those schools is whiter  
16 than they are in the specialized high schools and  
17 they're less Asian-American. Those are the  
18 demographic statistics that we have. In my borough  
19 there are no gifted and talented classes in most of  
20 the school districts. All of the school districts in  
21 the south Bronx, as far as I know, there are no  
22 gifted and talented classes. So there are so many  
23 different things that we could do to change things  
24 way before eighth grade, way before kids take the  
25

1  
2 test. The fact is that given the overwhelming  
3 majority of the kids who are at the specialized high  
4 schools are minority, and the majority of them  
5 qualify for free lunch. I think we have to really  
6 identify what the problem is, and the problem isn't  
7 the SHSAT. The problem is that the education system  
8 has failed them from day one.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you.

10 Assemblyman?

11 WILLIAM COLTON: Good afternoon. My name  
12 is Assemblyman William Colton. I represent the 47<sup>th</sup>  
13 Assembly District. I've come here together with  
14 Nancy Tong who serves the 47<sup>th</sup> Assembly District as  
15 the first Asian-American in Brooklyn to be elected a  
16 democratic district leader, to present testimony  
17 against the passage of Reso 442 and in favor of Intro  
18 511 and Reso 453. The specialized high school  
19 admissions test provides a transparent and unbiased  
20 test for admission to New York City's specialized  
21 high schools. These specialized high schools have  
22 been overwhelmingly successful in providing a  
23 rigorous and high quality education for high  
24 achieving students for many years. They have  
25 provided the pathway to success for countless

1 economically struggling families, especially  
2 immigrant families. As such, these highly regarded  
3 high schools have enabled many immigrants from all  
4 over the world to obtain the opportunity to achieve  
5 the American Dream, overcoming many obstacles these  
6 families continually face. They are not populated by  
7 children of the most wealthy but rather a large  
8 portion of their students come from lower income  
9 families. For example, over 60 percent of the  
10 children attending Brooklyn Tech and over 30 percent  
11 of those attending Stuyvesant qualify for Title One  
12 free school lunches. It has been claimed that these  
13 specialized high schools serving the needs of New  
14 York City's highest achieving students lack  
15 diversity. In fact, if you look in an elevator full  
16 of children from these schools, you would see the  
17 faces and colors of high achieving children and of  
18 immigrant families from all over the world. What is  
19 seen as a lack of diversity is more accurately an  
20 underrepresentation of proportional ethnic groups in  
21 the city. This underrepresentation is not caused by  
22 the test discriminating against nay children in the  
23 underrepresented groups, but rather by long and  
24 continuing failure of the New York City public school  
25

1  
2 system to provide a quality education to all its  
3 children. A careful analysis will indicated that the  
4 scores of such children in New York State math tests  
5 show that with African-Americans, less than five  
6 percent have scored a four on these statewide tests.  
7 The SHSAT, which is an admission test and which  
8 admits students by their score ranking provides an  
9 objective and unbiased and transparent process, which  
10 is not influenced by who you know. I believe that  
11 the lack of confidence in the New York City public  
12 school system, as a result of that, the parents of  
13 high achieving children from many of the  
14 unrepresented groups have been removing their  
15 children from the New York City public schools system  
16 and sending them to charter schools and private  
17 schools, which have been aggressively recruiting  
18 these children. Eliminating the SHSAT as the sole  
19 criteria for admission to our specialized high school  
20 will not solve this problem but rather will  
21 discriminate against those high achieving children of  
22 those groups deemed to be overrepresented, many  
23 including economically disadvantaged immigrant  
24 families who have earned a seat in the specialized  
25 high schools and thereby have found a pathway to

1 success and to the American dream. I support greater  
2 representation of the underrepresented groups by  
3 directing more resources to increase the levels of  
4 achievement for these children and to better prepare,  
5 assist and encourage these children to meet the  
6 rigorous objective standards of the SSHSAT. And I'd  
7 like to associate myself with the remarks of my  
8 colleague Senator Stavisky and Assembly Member  
9 Dinowitz in terms of specific ways of dealing with  
10 that. I support Intro 511 and Reso 453, which deal  
11 with studying the issue of diversity and committing  
12 to finding ways in which we may truly facilitate and  
13 implement better school diversity. Thank you.

14  
15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you,  
16 Assemblyman, and our State Committeewoman next.

17 NANCY TONG: My name is Nancy Tong. I am  
18 proud to be the mother of a child who has attended  
19 Brooklyn Tech. I am also honored to be serving as  
20 the first Asian-American in Brooklyn to be elected a  
21 democratic district leader and State Committeewoman.  
22 I came to America as a child where I first lived with  
23 my family on Elizabeth Street in the neighborhood  
24 known as Little Italy. About 12 years ago I moved to  
25 Benson Hurst. I have always taught my son the



1 importance of a good education and the value of  
2 studying hard and doing his best in school. My son  
3 worked hard and through this specialized high school  
4 admissions test, he earned the right to attend  
5 Brooklyn Tech. He says he wants to be a doctor, but  
6 whatever career he may eventually enter, he is now on  
7 the path to achieving the American dream, which  
8 motivated our family to come to America. The process  
9 of an objective and unbiased test for the admission  
10 to the New York City's specialized high schools has  
11 enabled so many immigrants from all over the world to  
12 obtain the opportunity to achieve the American dream  
13 despite the many obstacles these families have faced.  
14 Many of the children who are admitted into the  
15 specialized high schools come from these lower income  
16 families. For example, over 60 percent of the  
17 children attending Brooklyn Tech and over 30 percent  
18 attending Stuyvesant qualify for the Title One free  
19 lunch, free school lunch. If the admissions process  
20 were changed to include subjective factors such as  
21 interviews, school grades, recommendations and so  
22 forth, how could I honestly tell my son that by  
23 working hard, studying and being the most qualified  
24 he would be able to earn his seat at Brooklyn Tech?  
25

1  
2 The SHSAT, which admits students by their score,  
3 provides an objective, unbiased and transparent  
4 process, which is not influenced by who you know. I  
5 support diversity in our schools, but when you look  
6 at the school population of the specialized high  
7 schools, you will see students of all colors,  
8 nationalities and economic levels. I believe there  
9 is not a lack of diversity in these specialized high  
10 schools, but rather an underrepresentation in groups,  
11 which the New York City school system has been  
12 failing to provide a quality education for many  
13 years. The parents of the highest achievers of these  
14 children have been removing their children from the  
15 New York City public school system and sending them  
16 to the charter schools and private schools which have  
17 aggressively recruited these students. We do not  
18 need to eliminate the SHSAT as the sole criteria for  
19 admission to our specialized high school, but rather  
20 must provide resources for the New York City  
21 Department of Education to better induce, prepare and  
22 assist its children to meet the rigorous objective  
23 standards of the SHSAT. These specialized high  
24 schools have won national renowned for their high  
25 standards and they have successfully enabled many

1  
2 children of immigrants and economically struggling  
3 families to archive a pathway to success. We must  
4 not tamper with this pathway, and thereby risk  
5 denying the high achieving children of these families  
6 their opportunity to escape from their economic  
7 disadvantages. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, thank you very  
9 much, and thank you all for coming in. I do have  
10 just a couple of comments and/or questions, and I'd  
11 like to ask you to respond maybe as you see fit.  
12 There is some confusion perhaps or maybe it's not  
13 clear to even myself when I read the legislation on  
14 the state level regarding the specialized high  
15 schools as to whether or not that legislation  
16 actually eliminates the use of the standardized test.  
17 From what I see here it doesn't seem to eliminate it,  
18 but it does say to make multiple measures. Are you  
19 advocating, and you can answer this individually, for  
20 only using the specialized high school test as the  
21 sole determinate for admission to the specialized  
22 high schools?

23 JEFFERY DINOWITZ: I'll speak. I'm  
24 advocating not changing the Hecht Calandra Law, which  
25 was passed in 1971. I'm advocating leaving it as is

1 in terms of the SHSAT being the sole criteria,  
2 because any criteria which is subjective is open to  
3 manipulation. It's open to corruption. It's open to  
4 political favoritism. We know that. That's a  
5 reality, and we have many, many high schools in this  
6 city that have various forms of admission. We have  
7 many schools that have multiple criteria that allows  
8 people, and I made reference to that with respect to  
9 the statements of Comptroller Scott Stringer, and I  
10 would bet you anything that if we did that with this  
11 test, you will not archive your desired result. The  
12 population probably would be similar to those of some  
13 of the other multiple criteria schools and at the  
14 same time you will deny qualified students the  
15 ability to go to the specialized high schools. So, I  
16 guess, speaking for myself, I would say that there  
17 should be one objective test. I'm not saying the  
18 test is perfect, but I'm saying that it has to be 100  
19 percent objective and not subject to any kind of  
20 favoritism.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: The legislation reads  
23 that state test scores should be used as part of the  
24 multiple criteria. I don't think you would argue that  
25 the state tests are not objective or subjective.

1  
2 JEFFERY DINOWITZ: I would argue that any  
3 test that is set up in such a way that different  
4 people marking it can come up with a different result  
5 such as other Regent's exams, such as essay exams.  
6 You know, the SATs for several years added a third  
7 component of essays, and I believe they eliminated  
8 that and perhaps that's one of the reasons.  
9 Different people can look at the same essay, for  
10 example, and come up with a very different grade.  
11 Different schools have different grading systems. An  
12 A in one school may not be the same as an A in  
13 another school. This test treats everybody exactly  
14 equally.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: But I don't know if  
16 that's what the legislation says about essays. I  
17 don't--

18 JEFFERY DINOWITZ: [interposing] The  
19 legislation talks about multiple criteria.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Multiple measures,  
21 right.

22 JEFFERY DINOWITZ: And--

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] The  
24 multiple measures are--

1  
2 JEFFERY DINOWITZ: [interposing] And I  
3 think some people have suggested, I made reference to  
4 this earlier, that we use attendance. Attendance,  
5 are you kidding me?

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, there is a  
7 provision in the legislation that says excused  
8 attendances, absences, would not be used for that  
9 purpose. So if it's an excused absence, then it  
10 would be used for that.

11 JEFFERY DINOWITZ: What does attendance  
12 have to do with it anyway?

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, it has a lot to  
14 do with it. If you're not in school, you can't  
15 learn, right?

16 JEFFERY DINOWITZ: That's very true. If  
17 you're not at school you cannot learn.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So it has a lot to do  
19 with it.

20 JEFFERY DINOWITZ: But you don't get a  
21 bonus for showing up--

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] What  
23 would you say to the argument--

24 JEFFERY DINOWITZ: to what you're supposed  
25 to show up at in the first place.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: What would you say to  
3 the argument that often times standardized tests are  
4 inherently culturally biased?

5 JEFFERY DINOWITZ: I don't--I'll fin--I  
6 don't know that I've ever heard an allegation that  
7 this test is culturally biased. The only allegation  
8 that I've heard is that some people don't like the  
9 results of the test. So we should take steps to try  
10 to change the results by making sure everybody gets a  
11 better education, but I don't know that there is any  
12 allegation of cultural bias in the test.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Have you see the test?

14 JEFFERY DINOWITZ: I took the test, and I  
15 passed the test, and my kids took the test. And I'll  
16 say one other thing, is the test culturally biased in  
17 favor of Asian-Americans, I don't think so.

18 TOBY ANN STAVISKY: My response is very  
19 similar. There's no evidence that has been  
20 demonstrated, and in fact, just the opposite, that  
21 adding criteria for admission is going to provide a  
22 more diverse student body. I think my position is  
23 exactly the same as Assemblyman Dinowitz, that the  
24 Hecht Calandra bill is fine the way it is. And the  
25 problem, though, is not the test. It's the prepare--

1  
2 it's the fault of our educational system. And you  
3 asked about attendance. I must say, what--the first  
4 thing that popped into my mind was Woody Allen's line  
5 about 90 percent of life is just showing up. Just  
6 showing up doesn't mean a child is learning. There  
7 may be other issues involved. For example, the child  
8 may be an immigrant and goes back to the country of  
9 origin with their families. There are a lot of  
10 reasons why attendance should not be a question here.  
11 But my position is that quite frankly until you give  
12 us an alternative, this is what we should be doing,  
13 and subjective questions, interviews, examinations of  
14 portfolios, that may be fine in some schools, but not  
15 in the specialized high schools.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, I think in the  
17 questioning that occurred here before, I don't know  
18 if you were here, it was brought up that Harvard and  
19 other top schools across the country do use multiple  
20 measures for admittance, and actually it's probably  
21 the practice for most of the country, that New York  
22 City might be the only school district that uses only  
23 the test for admission into the specialized--into  
24 specialized programs at all. How would you respond  
25 to that?



1  
2 WILLIAM COLTON: Yes, I think the New  
3 York City specialized schools are schools dedicated  
4 to challenging and encouraging and bringing out the  
5 most highest achieving students who have achieved the  
6 highest levels. High performing children also need  
7 to be challenged. They have special needs. One of  
8 the things that I think is good about the New York  
9 City public schools system is that we at least are  
10 trying to provide choices, different choices.  
11 Children have different needs. They have different  
12 skills. They have different abilities, different  
13 strengths, and we need to make sure that we provide  
14 schools that deal with all of those. Now, the  
15 specialized high schools are specifically dealing  
16 with the highest performing of children. The test  
17 has to measure who are the highest performing  
18 children. For example, when you're dealing with  
19 colleges such as the Ivy League colleges of Harvard  
20 and so forth, their criteria is not based upon the  
21 highest performing children. They have other--these  
22 are private institutions and they have other agendas,  
23 like for example, making sure that there are students  
24 there whose parents are very wealthy and who will  
25 make sure they give big donations to those schools.

1  
2 So they have a subjective criteria which allows them  
3 to pick and choose. I think you'll find in many of  
4 the Ivy Leagues that many children who attended  
5 Harvard, it's end up their children or grandchildren  
6 also attend Harvard. It's not an objective criteria.  
7 I don't think that's what we want to do with the  
8 specialized high schools, and I think, you know, I  
9 don't know whether how many other systems use a  
10 specialized high school approach, but I do know that  
11 clearly New York City is renowned for its approach.  
12 This has been one of the most successful education  
13 programs not only citywide but nationwide, and if it  
14 isn't broke we shouldn't be changing it. So, I too  
15 agree with my colleagues here that we should not be  
16 changing the criteria that the law currently has set  
17 because it has worked, and I think what we must do is  
18 we must encourage and we must provide resources. We  
19 must provide an expansion of the DREAM program. We  
20 must encourage and make people aware that this  
21 exists. One of the problems here, which I mentioned  
22 in my testimony, is that many parents of the groups  
23 that are unrepresented have been taken and their  
24 children have been enticed to go to charter school  
25 and private schools instead of going to a school like

1  
2 Stuyvesant, and one of the reasons for that is the  
3 lack of confidence in the public schools system.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, what's the  
5 solution? Obviously all of you on the panel agree  
6 that the racial makeup of these specialized high  
7 schools is not an ideal situation. I know--

8 JEFFERY DINOWITZ: [interposing] I think  
9 we've all--

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] you're  
11 state legislators. What about funding for the New  
12 York City public schools?

13 JEFFERY DINOWITZ: I think we've all made  
14 references--

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Are you  
16 committed to providing that--

17 JEFFERY DINOWITZ: to solutions to that.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: additional funding?  
19 I'm sorry?

20 JEFFERY DINOWITZ: I think we all made  
21 reference to solutions. First of all, the state  
22 should fund the schools more, but the state this past  
23 year as you know, put up a substantial amount of  
24 money to fund universal pre-k, and as I said earlier,  
25 that's really where all this starts. It doesn't

1  
2 start in eighth grade. And you know, Assemblyman  
3 Colton really said it right. When I made reference  
4 earlier to the fact that these schools, you don't get  
5 in because you have a rich daddy. What I meant was  
6 exactly what he said. The criteria--

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] So, what  
8 you're proposing, though, Assembly Member--

9 JEFFERY DINOWITZ: is very objective.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: What you're proposing  
11 is that we have preparation programs, we have other  
12 things. What can you do on the state level to ensure  
13 that that will happen? Can we work together to  
14 provide CFE money? What can we do together to make  
15 sure that the solutions that you're proposing  
16 actually happen?

17 JEFFERY DINOWITZ: We should be working  
18 together, and I think the city and the state do work  
19 together. The state has significantly but not enough  
20 increased public schools funding in recent years. It  
21 just has to go into the things that it should go  
22 into. We shouldn't be spending hundreds of millions  
23 of dollars setting up a phony grading system and  
24 other stupid things at the--under the previous  
25 Administration, the Department of Ed spent its money

1 on. But the fact is, we have money, we just have to  
2 direct it in the right way. The specialized high  
3 schools are unique perhaps in the country, and we  
4 don't have to change everything in every single  
5 school that exists. And you know, I mean, this may  
6 make some people feel a little uncomfortable, but I  
7 was reading a story, I think it related to maybe  
8 Princeton or Har--I think it was Princeton in the  
9 Times maybe just in the past week. And there are  
10 suggestions that some of those schools have, you  
11 know, informal quotas against certain populations,  
12 kind of--in this case, Asian-Americans. Kind of like  
13 what happened with Jews, you know, in the last  
14 century. And you know, the results are what the  
15 results are. We can't change how well people do on a  
16 test, what we can--a week before the test. What we  
17 can change is making sure that we really put up the  
18 resources from day one and even before so that when  
19 kids start out they have an opportunity to do well so  
20 that a kid who starts out in kindergarten not reading  
21 may have an opportunity to get into Bronx Science,  
22 just like the kid who starts out in kindergarten  
23 reading.  
24

1  
2 TOBY ANN STAVISKY: Let me also add a  
3 couple of things. Number one, the state legislature  
4 has for as long as I can remember each year increased  
5 the amount of aid statewide and to New York City.  
6 Secondly, we're going to--the mayoral control issue  
7 is going to come up. It expires in June, and perhaps  
8 the City Council will take a look at some suggestions  
9 so that there can be a better division of funding.  
10 Assemblyman Dinowitz was referring to an op-ed  
11 article from November 25<sup>th</sup> of this year in the New  
12 York Times, and it said, "Is Harvard unfair to Asian-  
13 Americans?" I hate to say this, but picking up on  
14 what the Assemblyman just said, when I went to  
15 Science it was heavily Jewish, and particularly the  
16 elite colleges, the Ivy League colleges discovered--  
17 and that's mentioned in this article, that they had a  
18 disproportionate share of Jewish students, and that's  
19 when they started initiating quotas, which are  
20 obviously unconstitutional according to the federal  
21 courts, but there are exceptions, and one of the  
22 exceptions is to improve diversity. We can't have a  
23 system where we set aside certain percentages. It  
24 was anti-Semitic in the 1940's for the returning  
25 service people, and it's wrong to do that to the

1  
2 Asian-American community today. And I say that as  
3 somebody who represents a large percentage. My  
4 district, as you well know, is probably two-thirds  
5 Asian-American. They don't deserve the  
6 discrimination. On the other hand, the minority  
7 students, the African-American and Latino students  
8 deserve better, and they deserve to have enrichment  
9 programs, etcetera, that we've spoken about.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. I was--

11 NANCY TONG: I have something to say.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I'm sorry, yes.

13 NANCY TONG: I have something to say.

14 Yeah, when they're saying the Asian-American, but  
15 this test was made 40, over 40 years ago. It wasn't  
16 made for the Asian. I remember when I came in the  
17 60's, my brothers, they also went and they got into  
18 Brooklyn Tech and Stuyvesant. Then my son went into  
19 Brooklyn Tech. These tests were not made for the  
20 Asians. They were made long time ago, and when they  
21 do work, I don't see why we have to--because the  
22 Asians have a big percentage of getting into the  
23 specialized high school they need to change it? I  
24 don't think that's fair for the Asians.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I don't think that's  
3 the argument. The argument is that--

4 NANCY TONG: [interposing] The resource  
5 that they need.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Excuse me. Excuse  
7 me. The argument is that other minorities are not  
8 equally well-represented. So I don't want to--I  
9 don't want to just boil it down to that. So that's a  
10 little point of difference that I would disagree with  
11 you on. Let me have Council Member Treyger ask a  
12 question.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Thank you,  
14 Chair. I would just like to say that I think that  
15 the biggest attack on diversity and the biggest  
16 attack on urban school districts like ours has been  
17 the broken state formula to distribute funding across  
18 New York State, which I actually have to say thank  
19 you to the Assembly Majority, and thank you to the  
20 Senate Minority for constantly reminding the  
21 governors, whether it's the present governor or prior  
22 governors that the way they equate the funding that  
23 we're one school district, and they equate us with  
24 some school districts out in some of the suburbs with  
25 only a few thousands kids, and they get per capita



1  
2 even more funding than us. So I actually want to  
3 thank you for speaking up for the school district  
4 here in New York City, and urge you to really mount  
5 an aggressive fight to address inequities that still  
6 exist in our funding streams to New York City. And I  
7 know, absolutely, I--and I know it's a battle to even  
8 get more monies into the city, and I applaud you and  
9 the Assembly Majority, Senate Minority for waging  
10 that battle against people who really don't like New  
11 York City very much. But, quite frankly, this to me,  
12 the broken formula of funding, that has been the  
13 biggest attack on diversity that we must address, and  
14 working together we'll get that job done. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I couldn't agree  
16 more, and I think that two billion dollars that we're  
17 owed in CFE money is vitally important to the city,  
18 vitally important.

19 TOBY ANN STAVISKY: The formula has  
20 improved over the years. I mean, we've established  
21 the foundation aid, particularly. It has gotten  
22 better over the years. At one time there are frankly  
23 too many school districts. We've got 700 and some  
24 odd school districts in New York State, and the city  
25 is considered one school district. At one time you

1 had what was called Save [sic] Harmless, where you  
2 got the same amount as you did last year, even though  
3 you had a decline in enrollment. We've gotten away  
4 from that and we're coming back to the formula, but  
5 the real issue, as far as I'm concerned, is the court  
6 decision, the campaign for fiscal equity lawsuit  
7 where we've got to start bringing that money back to  
8 the city.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Couldn't agree more.

11 WILLIAM COLTON: I would also like to say  
12 that we have to make a commitment in the state. We  
13 have been improving. We've been doing more and  
14 that's good, but we have to get to full CFE funding.  
15 We have to really work together with the city and the  
16 City Council and all groups, because that money is  
17 needed to make sure that our children get the  
18 resources that will eliminate a lot of the  
19 underrepresented groups that it is appearing, but we  
20 also must get, you know, strong support from the city  
21 in terms of using those monies well. The DREAM  
22 program is a program that should have a lot more  
23 seats than it has right now. We should be making  
24 parents, a real consorted effort, making parents  
25 aware that their children should take the SHSAT

1  
2 unless they choose to opt out from it and make their  
3 own decision that they don't want their child to go  
4 to that particular or to try for that school. We  
5 must provide resources for smaller class size. We  
6 must provide those things, and sometimes in the past,  
7 and you know, this administration I trust is going to  
8 be different, but in the past administrations have  
9 used these monies and spent them on consultants, and  
10 then we face a difficult task in the legislature to  
11 convince our colleagues from other parts of the state  
12 why we should be changing the formula and giving more  
13 monies to New York City. So, we really have to make a  
14 strong, consorted effort at correcting CFE.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, I think that's a  
16 great challenge and I would like to work with you  
17 together on that. Maybe we can do a hearing up in  
18 Albany on CFE money to draw attention to the fact  
19 that we're not getting our fair share of tax dollars.  
20 I want to thank you all for coming in, and I'm going  
21 to call the next panel. Thank you, very, very much.

22 JEFFERY DINOWITZ: Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Janella Hinds from the  
24 United Federation of Teachers, Rachel Kleinman from  
25 the NAACP, Esmeralda Simmons from the Center for Law

1  
2 and Social Justice, Jose Perez, Latino Justice, and  
3 Lazar Treschan, Community Service Society of New  
4 York. Alright, would you please raise your right  
5 hand so I can swear you in? Do you solemnly swear or  
6 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing  
7 but the truth, and to answer Council Member questions  
8 honestly? Thank you. And, Ms. Hinds, you want to  
9 start?

10 JANELLA HINDS: Good afternoon, Chairman  
11 Dromm and the members of this distinguished  
12 committee. My name is Janella Hinds, and I am Vice  
13 President for Academic High Schools for the United  
14 Federation of Teachers. On behalf of our union, I  
15 want to thank the Council for holding this hearing  
16 today, and for allowing us the opportunity to share  
17 our views. As we know, New York has been a gateway  
18 city for immigrants from across the globe and is  
19 widely considered a beacon of diversity like no  
20 other, yet studies have shown that our schools are  
21 considered among the most segregated in the state.  
22 The problem is especially prevalent in our  
23 specialized high schools, and I'm going to spend my  
24 time today discussing those issues and solutions that  
25 we propose. We commend the City Council and the

1  
2 members of this committee for bringing us all  
3 together to begin the conversation, this very tough  
4 conversation about diversity and admissions to  
5 specialized high schools, and we thank Council  
6 Members Lander, Torres and Barron for introducing the  
7 important pieces of legislation. We are looking  
8 forward to working together with the council, and we  
9 believe that we can make important policy changes to  
10 fix what is broken as well as to expand access and  
11 achieve greater equity for high achieving talented  
12 students in neighborhoods across the city. So we  
13 support proposed Introduction number 511A 2014 and  
14 Resolution 453-2014, and we also support Resolution  
15 442-2014. This state legislation S7738A9979, which  
16 is one of our top legislative priorities in Albany  
17 enacts a series of changes to the admissions process  
18 for the city's specialized high schools that will  
19 extend opportunities across the city to a larger pool  
20 of deserving students by removing their barriers to  
21 access. The members of our task force believe that  
22 there are talented students across the city who are  
23 not getting the opportunity to be effectively  
24 prepared for this exam, or to take the exam in large  
25 numbers. They also don't believe that this exam is

1 best aligned to the work that they need to know and  
2 do in these schools, and so they challenge the  
3 validity of the specialized high school's exam,  
4 admissions test. The taskforce comprised of  
5 educators representing all of these schools are--had  
6 diverse opinions but engaged in vigorous debate,  
7 expressing views on all sides of the issues and came  
8 to consensus in recommending a couple of elements  
9 that are especially important for this legislation,  
10 creating language to broaden the definition of what  
11 constitutes the highest performing scholars,  
12 specifically that there be a power score pathway  
13 using a combination of grades, state exam scores,  
14 attendance, and some version of a revised specialized  
15 high school admissions test, expanding the applicant  
16 pool by better publicizing the specialized high  
17 schools admissions procedures, leveling the playing  
18 field by providing free electronic preparation  
19 materials and changing the Discovery Program for  
20 applicants who narrowly miss the admit score to make  
21 it mandatory for all schools, resulting in an  
22 intensive summer program for scholars and aligning  
23 each Discovery program with the skills needed for  
24 incoming ninth graders specific to each school. We  
25

1  
2 believe that underrepresented students, particularly  
3 black and Latino students deserve a fair and  
4 equitable opportunity to succeed at the highest  
5 levels, and if that is the case, then it's crucial  
6 that we support policies that expand access to  
7 talented middle school students across the city. We  
8 are not confident that the specialized high school's  
9 admissions test that is in place today is the same  
10 exact test that was taken by people who have  
11 previously testified before this body. We believe  
12 that the specialized high school's admissions test  
13 needs some revision. It needs to be reviewed, and it  
14 needs to more successfully align to the work that  
15 students need to know and be able to do in the  
16 specialized high school of New York City. And so, we  
17 commend you for bringing forward these resolutions  
18 and these introduction items, and we look forward to  
19 partnering with you as we address this very important  
20 issue for New York City's high schools.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next  
22 please.

23 RACHEL KLEINMAN: Good afternoon. My name  
24 is Rachel Kleinman. I'm Assistant Counsel at the  
25 NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund. I would

1  
2 like to thank the City Council for affording LDF the  
3 opportunity to address the current proposals to  
4 improve school diversity. The reforms advanced by  
5 Council Member Torres, Lander and Barron are  
6 consistent with LDF's ongoing efforts to ensure  
7 diversity in New York City schools. In 2012, LDF  
8 along with Latino Justice and the Center for Law and  
9 Social Justice at Medgar Evers College first called  
10 for a change in state law regarding admissions to the  
11 New York City specialized high school in federal  
12 civil rights complaint. The complaint was filed with  
13 the US Department of Education's Office for Civil  
14 Rights on behalf of a broad coalition of New York  
15 education, civil rights and social justice  
16 organizations challenging the admissions process at  
17 New York City's elite public specialized high  
18 schools. A complaint, which is currently being  
19 investigated, alleges that in addition to being bad  
20 education policy, the single test admissions policy  
21 has an unlawfully, racially desperate [sic] impact.  
22 The 11 complainant organizations on the complaint  
23 represent diverse constituencies including African-  
24 Americans, Latino and Asian-American community  
25 members. In addition, the complaint has received



1  
2 broad support including written statements from among  
3 others, the Asian-American Legal Defense Fund, the  
4 New York Urban League, Advocates for Children, and  
5 the Coalition for Asian-American Children and  
6 Families. The New York City Department--sorry.  
7 Currently, admission into specialized high school is  
8 based exclusively on the result of a single test.  
9 This kind of policy, education experts agree is  
10 arbitrary, inaccurate and an unfair measure of merit.  
11 The New York City Department of Education has  
12 admitted that it has never studied the specialized  
13 high school admissions test to determine whether or  
14 predict success of specialized high schools.  
15 Amending the single test admissions policy to allow  
16 for additional measures of academic measure, merit,  
17 will make the process fairer for all students. This  
18 is not about lowering standards, it's about raising  
19 standards to look at performance across multiple  
20 measures. The current admissions policy has a  
21 particularly devastating impact on black and Latino  
22 students who have startlingly low admissions rates.  
23 Of the nearly 12,000 black and Latino students who  
24 took the Fall 2012 SHSAT exam, just over 600 were  
25 offered admission to any of the high schools. Out of

1  
2 the 952 eighth grade students who received offers to  
3 Metriculate [sp?] and Stuyvesant High School, seven  
4 were black, 21 Hispanic. Resolution number 442 calls  
5 on the state to change the law to allow the  
6 specialized high schools to open up their admissions  
7 policies to include multiple measures of merit. The  
8 resolution does not, however, on its face recognize  
9 that Mayor de Blasio and the New York City Department  
10 of Education can on their own change the admissions  
11 process for five of the eight specialized high  
12 schools that are not named in the state law.  
13 Therefore, that we ask the City Council amend  
14 Resolution 442 to include a call for change at the  
15 city level, and to urge the Mayor to use his  
16 authority to immediately change the admissions policy  
17 for the five newest specialized high schools in New  
18 York City and to join community advocates in calling  
19 upon state law makers to help change the admissions  
20 policy with the city's three oldest specialized high  
21 schools. LDF urges the advancement of all of the  
22 proposed measures seeking to address and remedy the  
23 racial segregation and racial isolation so prevalent  
24 in New York City's public schools. LDF stands ready  
25 to work with law makers and others to advance these

1  
2 measures and we continue the work to achieve racial  
3 diversity in our public schools.

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

6 LAZAR TRESCHAN: I'll be quick. I'm Lazar  
7 Treschan. I'm from the Community Service Society.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Can you speak just a  
9 little louder for me.

10 LAZAR TRESCHAN: Lazar Treschan from the  
11 Community Service Society, proud public schools  
12 student graduate in New York City and child of public  
13 schools teachers. I won't read my testimony. You  
14 have it. I want to just echo what Council Member  
15 Lander said earlier. Studies have shown we have the  
16 most segregated schools in the country, and Council  
17 Member Lander pointed that look, there's a moment in  
18 time where our public institutions are failing us.  
19 And one of the big challenges, I think what we've  
20 seen with recent events is that the systems aren't  
21 failing, right? The systems are actually working.  
22 They're just working to protect certain types of  
23 people in those systems, and the same is true in  
24 education. This law was created to address a  
25 completely different set of circumstances in the

1  
2 early 1970's, principally known as white flight and a  
3 lot of challenges the cities were having to create an  
4 end [sic] around the school system for certain types  
5 of families, because the dynamics of New York City  
6 were completely different. That's what Hecht  
7 Calandra's about, and we have an opportunity as a  
8 city to reflect on our public institutions. This  
9 institution of the specialized admission test, the  
10 Community Service Society has recently gotten data  
11 from the DOE, a much more open DOE than the last  
12 administration and is looking at the results of the  
13 specialized high school admissions test compared to  
14 middle school performance and they're not really that  
15 related. Our kids are taking plenty of tests  
16 already. The state exams, which the Chairman  
17 referred, are perfectly good exams, and everyone  
18 studies for those in school. We spend so much time  
19 now complaining that our students are spending too  
20 much time cramming for those test in school, but at  
21 least they're all studying for them. At least  
22 students are paying extra to study for them outside  
23 of the school. Those are objective exams, and there  
24 are a lot of different ways to use those. Those are  
25 exact--those are connected to school standards. The

1  
2 specialized high school admission test is not connect  
3 to school standards. There has been no validation of  
4 it. Math, and even the way it's scored, if you do  
5 the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile on both sections you will not get  
6 in, but if you get the 99<sup>th</sup> percentile in one section  
7 and the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile or 55<sup>th</sup> percentile in another  
8 section, you will get in. What does that mean? You  
9 can game the test. That is not the case with the  
10 state test scores. So what do you do when you go  
11 into a prep course for the specialized high schools?  
12 They tell you, we're just going to find the one  
13 section you're good at, and you're just going to kill  
14 that section and just going to do okay on the other  
15 one, right? That is not a fair system, because you  
16 only are figuring that out if you have the resources  
17 or a family. You know, someone--some talked about  
18 the parents. You know, who you parents are is a roll  
19 of the dice, so it's not--not everybody gets the same  
20 parents that are going to push them into the same  
21 type of programs. So, let's at least let our schools  
22 do their job and prepare kids, and admissions to the  
23 specialized high schools needs to be a much better  
24 reflection of what's happening in the schools. We  
25 have state exams. We have grades, and we're looking

1  
2 forward to talking to Council bout proposals to use  
3 those in a much fairer way.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next  
5 please?

6 JOSE PEREZ: Good afternoon, Council  
7 Member, Chairman Dromm, Council Member Lander. Thank  
8 you for holding this hearing and inviting Latino  
9 Justice PRLDEF. My name is Jose Perez. I am the  
10 Deputy General Counsel and Legal Director at Latino  
11 Justice. We were formed in 1972 as the Puerto Rican  
12 Legal Defense and Education Fund. From the days that  
13 we opened our doors to our first lawsuit against the  
14 city Board of Education about bilingual education,  
15 the Espida [sp?] case, to today, we are still  
16 litigating and fighting against segregation and the  
17 deprived right of Latino children to a fair education  
18 from, again, bilingual ed in the 70's to  
19 unaccompanied minor children being denied the right  
20 to a free public education in places like Long  
21 Island, Hudson Valley and down south. We're talking  
22 about--it is--the report that's been cited from UCLA,  
23 again, that you know, when we talk about segregated  
24 schools, we think about that this is something that's  
25 happening in the south, Alabama, Mississippi. Well,

1  
2 folks, it's happening here in our own home town back  
3 yard. New York City, known as the gorgeous mosaic,  
4 yet that it still encounters and deals with this on a  
5 daily basis. Latino justice supports the two  
6 resolutions and the intro that have been introduced,  
7 and we call upon our city and state legislatures to  
8 ensure diversity in New York City's K through 12  
9 public schools and make that become a reality. I  
10 think adopting the intro and the resolutions is a  
11 positive step forward towards a commitment to  
12 diversifying New York City's public schools. Let us  
13 wake up to the realities of current state of  
14 segregation in our city and particularly its harmful  
15 effects on our school aged children. The comments  
16 that, you know, it ain't broke don't fix it. Well,  
17 folks, it's broke. The time when we filed our  
18 administrative complaint that you heard my colleague  
19 Rachel form the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, and my  
20 colleague who to speak from Medgar Evers Center for  
21 Law and Social Justice, the admission--that complaint  
22 was filed with the US Department of Education in  
23 September 2012. The numbers at that time, the impact  
24 when you talk about numbers, at that time the  
25 admissions for the 2012 school year, again, of the

1 967 eighth grade students offered admission to  
2 Stuyvesant for that year, just 19, two percent, were  
3 African-American, 32, 3.3 percent were Latinos. What  
4 is--the numbers speak for themselves, and you heard  
5 my colleagues say, this is evidence of disparate  
6 impact. The most recent numbers announced by the  
7 Department of Education in March of this year for the  
8 current 2014 school year, the percentage of African-  
9 American test takers offered admission to the eight  
10 elite high schools is only five percent, and the  
11 percentage for Hispanic students were seven percent,  
12 worse than the numbers over the past several years.  
13 Of the 5,096 students accepted into the city's eight  
14 specialized high schools for this current school  
15 year, only 350 were Hispanic, and this according data  
16 from the Department of Education. Last year they  
17 admitted 375. So what does this signify? The  
18 numbers are going down. The sharpest declines came  
19 at the city's most selective schools. Out of the 952  
20 students accepted to ultra-elite Stuyvesant, just  
21 seven are black and 21 are Latino. Last year, they  
22 accepted 33 total black and Latino. At Bronx Science  
23 in 2014, 18 blacks and 15 Latinos were accepted out  
24 of 968 students. Last year in 2012-2013, 25 blacks



1  
2 and 54 Latinos. Folks, the system is broken. The  
3 legislation up in Albany to reform and amend the  
4 Calandra Hecht Act, doesn't call for the elimination  
5 as has been misquoted of the specialized. It calls  
6 for a test. What's amazing is that in all these  
7 years of the use of this test, it has never been  
8 validated as an accurate barometer of academic  
9 success. So, how--why does the city continue to  
10 utilize this exam and why does it continue to pay,  
11 expend exorbitant funds for a private testing  
12 company, Pearson. That's perhaps something for this  
13 committee to examine and to examine the current RFP  
14 process to the Department of Education. The  
15 Department of Education can take immediate steps to  
16 reform the process. It doesn't have for all your  
17 counterparts in Albany to act. The city, the  
18 Chancellor could immediately make multiple measures  
19 and appropriate, including some form of validated  
20 test and admission criteria for the five additional  
21 schools besides the big three. I would hope and urge  
22 this committee to monitor the Chancellor and the  
23 Department of Education's efforts in this regard.  
24 Thank you.

25 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

1  
2                   ESMERALDA SIMMONS: Good afternoon. My  
3 name is Esmeralda Simmons. I'm the Executive  
4 Director for Law and Social Justice at Medgar Evers  
5 College of the City University of New York. I sit  
6 here with my colleagues who have joined, we have  
7 joined together and filed the historic administrative  
8 complaint with the Office of Civil Rights for the US  
9 Department of Education, and I'm happy to say that I  
10 think that that filing of that complaint has set this  
11 major ball rolling. Two years ago, there was no hue  
12 [sic] and cry about what was going on at the  
13 specialized high schools and the admission process.  
14 Look at the discussion today. I thank the City  
15 Council, Chair Dromm, as well as Council Member  
16 Lander, Council Member Barron and Council Member  
17 Torres for bringing these resolutions before us  
18 today. But I will also ask everyone here to be very,  
19 very aware that it is indeed our New York State  
20 legislative representatives that are going to have to  
21 make most of the movement in sort of eliminating the  
22 test as a sole criteria for the three oldest standing  
23 specialized high schools, but as has already been  
24 stated, right now, today, New York City has the power  
25 to change the criteria it is using for the remaining-

1  
2 - I'm going to say five, but I heard today it might  
3 be six--the remaining five specialized high schools  
4 that was expanded under the Bloomberg Administration  
5 to also only use this sole test. Now, since the City  
6 Council, this Oversight Committee/Education Committee  
7 has so much influence, and since we know that the  
8 administration has already pledged to make major  
9 strides, and we are working, partnering with them in  
10 an advisory capacity to change this situation. We  
11 urge that it be changed not next year, but be cha--  
12 I'm sorry. Not after the test is taken for another  
13 time and we have another set of abysmal statistics  
14 and so many young black and Latino students have  
15 their aspirations dashed, we ask that you change the  
16 criteria for the remaining five specialized high  
17 schools now. We applaud this committee and the  
18 Center for Law and Social Justice supports each of  
19 the resolutions that are before us today. We applaud  
20 this committee and we urge that you continue to press  
21 the Department of Education on the diversity  
22 statistics and on diversity implementation because we  
23 know that we have had laws on the books forever  
24 regarding diversity and I might dare say equal  
25 educational opportunity as we "celebrate" the

1 anniversary of Brown versus Board of Education. I'm  
2 going to end by simply saying that New York City is  
3 not just now beginning its very sad route down the  
4 road of segregation and education. The Office of  
5 Civil Rights in the United States Department of  
6 Education has already cited the New York City  
7 Department of Education all the way back in the  
8 1970's for having the most segregated school system  
9 in the country, and the city supposedly took steps to  
10 change that. Well, we now know, based on that report  
11 from UCLA, that in fact we are exactly where we were  
12 40 years ago and things are not getting better. In  
13 fact, they are getting worse. We urge you to act  
14 now. We applaud the action of this committee. Thank  
15 you.  
16

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much,  
18 and thank you for that impassioned testimony. I  
19 appreciate it very much. Let me just say, talk about  
20 passion. You know, I was a New York City public  
21 school teacher for 25 years before I got elected to  
22 the City Council, and education's always been my  
23 passion, and throughout my whole career as an  
24 educator I have always said that I do not believe in  
25 single test scores, standardized test scores as being

1  
2 the sole determining factor in how a child is going  
3 to turn out to be no matter what. And I have to tell  
4 you, going into this discussion I hold that belief,  
5 that educational belief as well. So, and I am one of  
6 the co-sponsors of the legis--of the resolution in  
7 the council here as well. So, that is where I'm  
8 coming from. And I want to go to Ms. Hinds testimony  
9 as well. It says that you support using a  
10 combination of grades, which I would assume is  
11 teacher grades,--

12 JANELLA HINDS: Yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: state test scores.

14 JANELLA HINDS: Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Fair objective?

16 JANELLA HINDS: Yes. Well--

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] To a  
18 certain extend.

19 JANELLA HINDS: as objective as any test.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: As a test, right, as  
21 a test score could be. Attendance and some version  
22 of a revised SHSAT score. So, to me, I mean, I don't  
23 understand what the opposition to that would be. I  
24 really just don't understand that. And, you know, if  
25 in fact, as one of the people who gave testimony

1  
2 before said that the state, that the test is the same  
3 as it's always been. Then shame on that, because  
4 that test hasn't changed in 40 years, then I don't  
5 know what we're putting out an RFP for, number one.  
6 And number two, I think change--time has changed and  
7 technology has changed and there's just so much more.  
8 And then the other disturbing factor that I find in  
9 many of these arguments is the fact that much of the  
10 tested material, much of the questions on the test is  
11 not information that's taught in the public schools  
12 system. So if you don't have money to get the test  
13 preparation or in some way to get that knowledge,  
14 you're not going to be able to do well on that test.  
15 And I still just cannot get around that argument. I  
16 just--that's my observation from having heard all of  
17 the testimony on this panel.

18 JANELLA HINDS: Yes, Chairman Dromm, and  
19 the members of the taskforce--that taskforce was  
20 comprised of educators in the specialized high  
21 schools. We had representation from all the of  
22 schools, came together and really thought about a  
23 proposal that might take into consideration all that  
24 a middle school students brings to this admissions  
25 process. That's where we came up with this proposal

1  
2 for the idea of a power score, bringing together not  
3 only their performance on a revised and aligned and  
4 validated specialized high schools admissions test,  
5 but their performance on state exams, their  
6 performance in classes, and attendance. And I know  
7 there's been a lot of joking around attendance today,  
8 but as a high school educator, attendance is  
9 critically important to my student's ability to  
10 perform in the classroom. Student's work ethic is  
11 developed by how they engage in the classroom. So  
12 we're not talking about just being there. We're  
13 talking about using that measure as one of several  
14 other measures to take into account how a student  
15 would perform.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I also want to say  
17 that I was impressed by the NAACP's list of  
18 statements of support for your testimony, American--  
19 Asian-American Legal Defense Fund, Advocates for  
20 Children, Alliance for Quality Education, CAV [sic]  
21 Organizing, Asian Communities, Coalition for Asian-  
22 American Children and Families, Committee for  
23 Hispanic Children and Families, and it goes on and on  
24 and on. It seems to be a broad coalition of  
25 interested parties in this that have come to

1  
2 understand why creating--and I wanted to correct some  
3 of the other testimony. This is not about taking  
4 away opportunity from some people, but opening  
5 opportunities for all children, and I think that's  
6 the focus of what we wanted this hearing to be here  
7 today.

8 RACHEL KLEINMAN: I just wanted to add we  
9 did have a very broad range of support in filing the  
10 complaint, and we did a lot of outreach before filing  
11 it because we were aware of some potential opposition  
12 that might come up and we wanted to make sure that  
13 that was taken into account. I think that's why we  
14 agree with people who say it needs to be studied  
15 first. We need to figure which measures make the most  
16 sense. There are objections to certain kinds of  
17 measures, and certainly some of our allies brought up  
18 some of the same concerns, including things like  
19 recommendations or interviews. That, you will not  
20 see that in the state legislation and we're not  
21 recommending that. You know, we agree that they  
22 should be objective measures, and I think, you know,  
23 that's what the--the state legislation reflects that,  
24 and the state legislation can still be amending,  
25 before passing this. You know, we need to look at



1  
2 which measures make the most sense and which make  
3 sense to a broad range of community members, not just  
4 African-American, Latinos, but to all students and  
5 families in the city.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And in my opening  
7 remarks I alluded to some of the misinformation  
8 that's been put out there, and I really would like to  
9 make sure that people stick to the facts today. I'm  
10 going to hold them to those facts when they come up  
11 to give testimony. So, I--no?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Just one question  
13 which I think is obvious from your testimony, but I  
14 do want to--first, it was helpful to hear that point  
15 I was going to ask about, the process of thinking  
16 about and developing the measures, because we heard  
17 concerns that I think we share, that obviously the  
18 goal is to address, you know, the abominably low  
19 percentage of African-American and Latino students in  
20 these outstanding schools, and so we want to be  
21 thoughtful about having a process which achieves  
22 that. No one's here to feel good about--you guys of  
23 engaging this litigation for far too long, and the,  
24 you know. So, but I think it must be obvious, but  
25 several of you spoke to agreeing with some of the

1 things that opponents of the legislation have said  
2 about expanding access, but it seems clear to me you  
3 must have looked and concluded that those are likely  
4 to be insufficient, that a set of things have been  
5 tried over the years that simply have not succeeded.  
6 So, I guess I do just want to ask that. I, you know,  
7 I think--I assume since your goal is to achieve  
8 increased representation of African-American and  
9 Latino students in those schools, if you believed it  
10 could be done simply with, you know, an array of sort  
11 of outreach, more students taking the test and some  
12 additional test prep, you would have been satisfied  
13 to propose that as a remedy and that therefore you  
14 don't believe it'll be sufficient based on your  
15 research and data, but it would be good to make sure  
16 we hear and understand that.

18 LAZAR TRESCHAN: So, we'll be putting  
19 something out within the next couple of months, but  
20 in response to, you know, more prep in middle school,  
21 the data that we've gotten from the DOE shows us that  
22 middle school has no influence on whether or not you  
23 get into a specialized high school. What you do in  
24 middle--and all the sorting is happening long before.  
25 And it's not that kids are smarter or less smart,

1  
2 it's the families they come from. How you, again,  
3 how you do in middle school does not really relate to  
4 what you do in the specialized high--whether or not  
5 you get into specialized high schools. Eighty-eight  
6 percent of kids in specialized high schools were  
7 screened for their middle school. So, basically,  
8 you're being screened at fourth grade or earlier and  
9 that determines whether or not you're going to have a  
10 chance to get into a specialized high school. All  
11 the middle schools are sorting mechanisms, and that's  
12 what the specialized high schools are as well.  
13 They're sorting mechanisms right now for families who  
14 are getting their kids into--whose kids are screened  
15 in fourth grade or earlier, and we've--and we begin  
16 to see that's continually ridiculous, this idea of  
17 well we need to expand test prep. Well, we're  
18 basically going to get to a situation, "Well, why  
19 should we have even have school? We should just have  
20 test prep." You know, and that's not what school is  
21 about, needs to be about. So, we would like to  
22 explore how someone who performs really well and  
23 overcomes obstacles in sixth, seventh and eighth  
24 grade. You know, we take all these exams already.  
25 How that can actually influence whether or not you

1  
2 get into specialized high school, right now it has no  
3 influence. You could finish top of your class, get  
4 fours on the English and math ELA and that doesn't  
5 guarantee you anything. In fact, there are many kids  
6 who are doing that, but because they don't have the  
7 resources--and getting 90 percentile on both sections  
8 of the SHSAT, but because they don't have the  
9 resources to figure out how to game the test, they  
10 are not getting in, and that's a shame.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Alright. Well--yes?

12 ESMERALDA SIMMONS: Thank you so much  
13 for raising that very significant question. There--  
14 the members of our coalition are not against some of  
15 the recommendations that have been given by prior  
16 persons who have testified or organizations. We  
17 applaud expanding opportunities, the DREAM. How  
18 about giving public schools the money that we  
19 deserve. We all applaud that. However, when it  
20 comes to admission to the specialized high schools we  
21 are saying there needs to be very significant study  
22 on what would actually effect, get the effect that we  
23 want of having it be a truly open process. When  
24 those number are skewed that way, it shows it is not  
25 truly an open process. So, what we're looking for--

1  
2 and there are those amongst us that have ties to  
3 those same high schools. My sister went to Bronx  
4 Science. My General Counsel, Joan Gibbs [sp?], whose  
5 in the audience today who is part of this lawsuit  
6 went to Bronx Science. We're not against Bronx  
7 Science or Stuyvesant or whatever, but we--even then,  
8 and my sister told me, she told me, "Go and get this  
9 fixed. I don't want my children to face the  
10 isolation I faced going to Bronx Science in the  
11 1970's." And that's gotten worse. It's gotten  
12 worse, and it's not just Bronx Science. So, folks,  
13 we need to fix it, and we need to fix it in a way  
14 that will actually have the effect that we want and  
15 at the same time continue to have equal opportunity  
16 for all students.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. And  
18 quickly, Ms. Hinds.

19 JANELLA HINDS: There's a perception that  
20 students who do not get into the specialized high  
21 schools are somehow not intellectually--have not met  
22 intellectual standards. We do not believe that that  
23 is true. For all of the reasons that have been  
24 stated by my colleagues on this panel, we know that  
25 there are talented students all around the city who

1  
2 are not getting the opportunities to attend these  
3 schools for a whole host of reasons, and we hope that  
4 we can work together to address that issue.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, again.  
6 Thank you all for coming, and I'm going to call the  
7 next panel. Lisa Donlan, I believe, from CEC One,  
8 David Goldsmith from CEC 13, Yasmin Secada, Parent  
9 Leadership Project, Ujju Aggarwal, Parent Leadership.  
10 And I would like to say that we have a delegation  
11 here today that is joining us from Beijing. They've  
12 been invited by Council Member Donovan Richards, and  
13 so I believe that they're up there. Would you please  
14 stand so we can say thank you for coming and visiting  
15 and hearing about our education system. Thank you for  
16 joining us today. Alright, now over here I'd like to  
17 swear you in, please. If you'd raise your right hand.  
18 Do you solemnly swear or affirm to tell the truth,  
19 the whole truth and nothing but the truth, and to  
20 answer Council Member questions honestly? Thank you.  
21 And would you like to start over here?

22 UJJU AGGARWAL: Yeah, thank you so much.  
23 Good afternoon. My name is Ujju Aggarwal, and I'd  
24 like to thank the council for organizing today's  
25 hearing. For over a decade I've worked as a

1  
2 community organizer and advocate in community school  
3 district three, and I'm pleased to be here today to  
4 share the work that we in District Three, along with  
5 our partners in Districts One and 13 have been doing.  
6 In addition to my long time work in District Three,  
7 I'm now a professor of education and public policy  
8 and my research examines the post Brown education  
9 policies and mechanisms that continue to produce what  
10 some have called our apartheid education system, a  
11 term quite applicable to New York City's public  
12 schools. As several have noted, New York State's  
13 public schools have been documented to be the most  
14 segregated in the country. New York City's public  
15 school system is now ranked the third most segregated  
16 schools system in the entire country. This is 60  
17 years after the US Supreme Court determined that  
18 separate but equal could never be so, and the  
19 separation of New York City's students based on race  
20 and income continues to impact the futures of over  
21 one million students. This is not a matter of mere  
22 diversity or multiculturalism, rather, it is a matter  
23 of racial justice. The separation of students based  
24 on race, class and language is directly tied to  
25 unequal learning environments, resources, curricula,

1 school facilities, personnel, and more, which in turn  
2 impacts student's academic achievement levels and  
3 life outcomes. The federal guidelines issued by the  
4 US Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights  
5 just recently this past year argues just the same,  
6 that disparities in educational resources have  
7 negative effects on student learning. Today, we've  
8 come here to share with you our joint policy  
9 initiative that we believe will successfully  
10 desegregate our schools in Districts One, Three and  
11 13, three districts that are at once extremely  
12 diverse, and yet, horribly segregated and strikingly  
13 unequal. As we well know, understanding that the  
14 ways that race and class based inequities manifest in  
15 different context is critical to knowing how to  
16 dismantle the structures of segregation. Those  
17 rooted in local communities provide invaluable  
18 expertise that must not be underestimated. Based on  
19 this understanding, in our districts we have engaged  
20 in the long process of dialogue, discussion and  
21 research to build consensus in our communities about  
22 the problems we face that our locals schools face and  
23 what can be done to fix them. In each of our  
24 districts we've come to the conclusion that a  
25



1 districtwide controlled choice policy is the best way  
2 forward. As many of you know, controlled choice is  
3 an acclaimed and successful students assignment  
4 methodology that was developed in the 1980's by  
5 Michael Alves who joins us today as well as others in  
6 Cambridge, Massachusetts as a way to voluntarily  
7 segregate schools and avoid the imposition of a court  
8 ordered student assignment policy. Controlled choice  
9 has been implemented in over 30 school districts  
10 across the United States to respond to systemic  
11 segregation. Based on our research, we have found  
12 that controlled choice is an educationally sound,  
13 transparent and equity driven method of assigning  
14 students to public schools. Within five years of  
15 implementing a comprehensive transparent and equity  
16 driven controlled choice assignment plan, all schools  
17 within a given district do three things. The first,  
18 they provide high quality educational opportunities  
19 that encourage every student to thrive. Second, they  
20 meet benchmark goals for diversity, and three, they  
21 ensure that all schools are well utilized and  
22 resourced. We're confident that with the proper  
23 support our districts can prove to be an effective  
24 pilot project that demonstrates a capacity for public  
25

1  
2 schools to equitably serve and reflect diverse  
3 student populations. We were happy to share this  
4 proposal with the Office of the Counsel to the Mayor  
5 earlier this year. Representatives from our  
6 districts will now share updates with you on the  
7 groundwork we have established in our districts.  
8 Thank you for your time. We hope you will join us.  
9 The need for change could never be more clear in our  
10 schools and on the streets. It is now our  
11 responsibility to make that happen.

12 LISA DONLAN: Thank you, Ujju, for that  
13 great introduction. My name is Lisa Donlan. I'm the  
14 President of CEC One, which is the lower east side  
15 East Village of Manhattan, and I'd like to thank the  
16 Education Committee today, particularly Chair Dromm  
17 and Council Member Lander and all of the other  
18 Council Members who sponsored the bills. District  
19 One has a long history of fighting for diversity and  
20 equity in education. Back in the 90's, the community  
21 school board removed all of the catchments in our  
22 community, creating a diversity and equity based  
23 assignment plan that was choice based, but that  
24 controls for fairness and equity. And we did a data  
25 study commissioned by CEC One last year with some

1  
2 urban planners, and it took a look at whether or not  
3 admission policy matters, and in deed it does. When  
4 that policy was in effect, our schools were becoming  
5 more like the entire neighborhood, which was the  
6 intention of the policy. All of our neighborhood  
7 schools should serve and reflect the entire  
8 neighborhood. That policy was slowly working to  
9 integrate our schools. However, with the onset of  
10 mayoral control and the centralization of the  
11 admissions policies and processes, the removal of the  
12 school boards and the district offices the  
13 centralized admission policy turned our diversity and  
14 equity based policy and plan into one that was choice  
15 based. We lost the controls and we kept the choice,  
16 and I think there's reams of research across the US,  
17 and we certainly have been able to verify it with our  
18 data study in District One. Choice alone segregates.  
19 Market-based choice does not address the problem of  
20 diversity and equity. In fact, it exacerbates it.  
21 Markets tend to lead to winners and losers, and we  
22 don't want that as a way of assigning students. The  
23 one thing that we've been able to do in District One  
24 in response to that is to work hard for the last 10  
25 years to advocate as a community, to ask for the

1 controls back on our choice plan, and we have been  
2 able to work effectively with the DOE and the Office  
3 of Student Enrollment on some minor changes, things  
4 like preference for siblings, pre-k articulating the  
5 K, but the one thing that we were never able to get  
6 any traction on with the past administration was to  
7 bring the equity and diversity piece back, and that's  
8 extremely important to us. The Bloomberg  
9 administration said choice is equity, but as our data  
10 shows, that's not true. If you look at, and I handed  
11 you lots of data guide, if you look at some of the  
12 links or the data I provided, you can see incredible  
13 stratification by race, class and socioeconomic  
14 status that is growing in District One. So we've  
15 come together now with a new administration in place  
16 with the hopes that as a community we can build  
17 consensus with what diversity looks like. And so  
18 we're doing monthly workshops where we bring in  
19 diverse groups of parents, students, teachers,  
20 educators and administrators, and we're working  
21 through a hands-on workshop that creates a safe  
22 environment where we can really delve into these  
23 difficult issues and say, "What does diversity look  
24 like? How would we measure it? How would we know  
25

1  
2 when we got there?" And we're hoping that by June  
3 we'll be able to present something to the Department  
4 of Education that says this is what our community  
5 wants, please work with us on it. We know what we  
6 want and we know this could be sound, and we can do  
7 this together, because we must address from community  
8 the citywide problem of segregation that is untenable  
9 for all of us.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next,  
11 please.

12 YASMIN SECADA: Hi, I'm Yasmin Secada,  
13 and I'm--

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Mic,  
15 please, yep.

16 YASMIN SECADA: Oh, there we go. Hi, I'm  
17 Yasmin Secada and I'm Co-coordinator of the Parent  
18 Leadership Project and a Theory [sic] Committee  
19 Member of the District Three Equity and Education  
20 Taskforce. I'm pleased to be here today to share  
21 with you the work we've been doing in community  
22 school District Three. District Three, which  
23 stretches from 59<sup>th</sup> Street to 122<sup>nd</sup> Street, mostly  
24 along the west side of Manhattan is one of the most  
25 racially and economically diverse districts in the

1 nation's largest school system. It is also one of  
2 the most segregated and unequal. Although our  
3 district's public school population averages 66  
4 percent students of color, many of our elementary  
5 schools do not reflect this reality. According to  
6 the criteria put forth by UCLA's civil right project  
7 recent report, intensely segregated schools are  
8 schools of less than white student enrollment and  
9 apartheid schools are schools with less than one  
10 percent white student enrollment. Based on these  
11 criteria, nine schools in District Three are  
12 intensely segregated, and of those nine, two are  
13 apartheid schools. According to the taskforce  
14 findings, District Three current admission policies  
15 and criteria have resulted in uneven access to the  
16 district schools and an uneven distribution of  
17 students. The combined average economic need index  
18 for District Three public elementary schools is 61  
19 percent. However, some schools range from under 15  
20 percent while others range as high as 97 to 100  
21 percent. English language learners comprise 8.8  
22 percent of District Three students, yet the  
23 percentage of ELL's at District Three schools ranges  
24 from a low of 0.2 percent to a high of 18.9 percent.  
25

1  
2 Approximately two-thirds of District Three students  
3 are black or Latino. Some schools, however, are  
4 comprised of 95 to 99 percent black and Latino  
5 students while our other schools, less than 30  
6 percent of the student body is comprised of black and  
7 Latino students. For many years, a member led social  
8 justice organization, the Center for Immigrant  
9 Families now PLP, challenge inequitable admissions in  
10 segregated and unequal schools. CIF documented the  
11 stories of over 300 low income parents of color and  
12 identified disparate treatment and mechanisms of  
13 exclusion at work in District Three. At PLP, we are  
14 committed to organizing through the lens of racial  
15 and economic justice and our community has to include  
16 all segments of the community. As we think about our  
17 schools, we must always ask who has access and who  
18 doesn't. In 2012, PLP joined forces with the  
19 educational leaders in District Three to spearhead a  
20 districtwide taskforce to examine the inequality in  
21 District Three schools. Amongst other reasons, the  
22 taskforce responded to a need for new and innovative  
23 policies. Other policy measures have not worked. The  
24 2009 Federal Magnet Grant recognized the racial and  
25 socioeconomic disparities amongst schools in District

1  
2 Three and awarded the district an 11 million dollar  
3 grant to address the high rates of racial isolation.  
4 Despite best efforts and good intentions, the Magnet  
5 Grant had limited impact. The taskforce includes  
6 educators, community leaders, parents, and education  
7 activists with the common goal of furthering  
8 equitable access for all students to all schools in  
9 our district. Over the course of two years of  
10 meetings we came to a consensus on a framework for  
11 creating a fair and equitable admissions policy in  
12 District Three, which we have recently published and  
13 have begun to share with others. As our findings  
14 demonstrate, a control choice policy can effectively  
15 achieve equity in District Three and ensure that our  
16 public schools reflect, respect and serve all  
17 families in the district. We look forward to  
18 continuing our work together, work that is rooted in  
19 our communities. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Very good. Thank  
21 you. Next, please?

22 DAVID GOLDSMITH: Hi, my name is David  
23 Goldsmith. I'm the President of Community Education  
24 Council for District 13 and Co-chair along with  
25 Barbara Freeman, our district superintendent of the



1  
2 District 13 Taskforce for Equal Access to Academic  
3 Excellence and Diversity, a short name. Thanks for  
4 inviting representatives from District One, Three and  
5 13 to share our experiences of the work we've been  
6 doing in our schools on diversity and equity. The  
7 District 13 taskforce includes parent leaders from  
8 the PTA's, school leadership teams, the CEC, as well  
9 as our superintendent, principals, school staff, and  
10 members of the community at large. Our taskforce  
11 initiative was born from the experiences of that  
12 famous PS 133 taskforce. The taskforce had been  
13 created--that taskforce had been created to help  
14 identify consensus on what would be an ideal  
15 enrollment plan for Rising Start District 13  
16 Elementary School that faced the possibility of  
17 losing the diversity so valued by all in its  
18 community. Those at the PS 133 taskforce table  
19 included both district superintendents,  
20 representatives from both CEC's, I see a former  
21 president right here from 15, president's council,  
22 elected officials, parent leaders, principals  
23 representing at least 10 different schools from both  
24 districts as well as community organization. I'd  
25 like to share with the Council here the District 13

1  
2 take away from this planning experience. The PS 133  
3 plan, number one, should be seen only as a well-  
4 intentioned first step. From the moment we reached  
5 an agreement with the Department of Education to  
6 implement the student enrollment plan we understood  
7 that the plan had many inherent flaws. Given the  
8 unwillingness of the Bloomberg Administration to even  
9 begin to tackle this issue, we felt that it was at  
10 least the best first step that we could take, but why  
11 a first step and not a long term solution? Because  
12 supporting what we found out was that supporting  
13 diversity and academic excellence in one school while  
14 leaving other schools to fend for themselves in our  
15 highly segregated school system can in fact have the  
16 unintended and quite negative effect of increasing  
17 segregation in surrounding schools. The 133  
18 taskforce came together. We understood the importance  
19 of impact that one school had on another, and that  
20 planning process proved to us that the enrollment  
21 policy or pattern of one school has a very large  
22 impact, and that impact cannot be ignored when we  
23 talk about diversity. We formed a district-wide  
24 diversity taskforce because we learned that the only  
25 viable approach to creating the diverse and highly

1  
2 successful schools we all want must be one that  
3 considers the challenges facing all the schools in  
4 our district. This dictates planning on a district-  
5 wide level. I'm here to report to you that we in  
6 District 13 know we must and can do better than a  
7 single school diversity plan that we helped at 133,  
8 and we in District 13 joined with those districts in  
9 one and three in asking the Mayor and the Chancellor  
10 to support our communities in our efforts to create  
11 viable, practical and fair districtwide solutions to  
12 the well documented extreme levels of segregation  
13 that cripple schools and indeed harm our children.  
14 Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you.  
16 Council Member Lander?

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you, Chair  
18 Dromm. Well, first of all, I really want to thank  
19 this panel for the real leadership that you've taken.  
20 I know in some places like District One it's been  
21 decades at this point, but for all of you it's been  
22 years and that it reflects real patient organizing.  
23 These are complex issues as we've heard this morning,  
24 mostly in the specialized high school context, but  
25 obviously in every school and district. They're

1  
2 challenging and tough issues, and just bringing  
3 people together, facing up to them, naming them out  
4 loud, building consensus to do something about them,  
5 and then pushing to raise them when--especially  
6 during the Bloomberg Administration, there was just  
7 no receptivity. You guys get real credit. I think  
8 the work to push this has been happening on the  
9 ground. That's what pushed me to get more involved  
10 here, and so I think in many ways this hearing is a  
11 testimony to your work and of other parent, you know,  
12 leaders and advocates in the room. So, first, thank  
13 you. Second, it was welcomed to hear from the DOE  
14 that there's an openness to talking with you, but I  
15 do know that, you know, you've seen some challenges  
16 there, and I just wonder if you can reflect a little  
17 bit on, you know, what you think, you know, we need  
18 to work together to persuade the DOE. We'll work  
19 about these models to address concerns they or others  
20 may have, and see how they can move forward.

21           DAVID GOLDSMITH: You want to take that  
22 or should I?

23           LISA DONLAN: Is the question, do we need  
24 to we need to work together with the DOE? I'm not  
25 clear.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: You know, it  
3 seems like we still a have some work to do to  
4 persuade.

5 LISA DONLAN: Yeah.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: I mean, there is  
7 an openness that we'll work together to take  
8 advantage of.

9 LISA DONLAN: Right.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: I think there's  
11 also--there must be some remaining challenges, and  
12 you're talking about doing a process that's going to  
13 take 'til June to have something more concrete on the  
14 table, but you know, what do you see as the  
15 challenges and barriers we have to overcome together  
16 to try to move forward on this model?

17 LISA DONLAN: Sure. I mean, I think that  
18 it's very clear that the DOE legally needs to really  
19 re-examine what is possible. We are very convinced  
20 and we have lots of legal support behind us saying  
21 that the measures that we're talking about are  
22 completely legal and permissible, and that there is  
23 plenty of guidance written out there, and the  
24 Department of Education has to brought along to  
25 understand that to be true. They're understandably

1  
2 risk averse to any kind of legal action, but we think  
3 that there's a much stronger chance of a legal action  
4 on the side of people who are experiencing the  
5 disparate impact that is unjustified from the current  
6 segregation. I think that's a much bigger threat and  
7 risk that the DOE should think about and think about  
8 proactively coming to solutions rather than letting  
9 those problems hit them in the courts is one thing.  
10 I think that the bill for data is very important. I  
11 don't know if anybody wanted to talk about that.

12           DAVID GOLDSMITH: Well, absolutely. You  
13 can't solve a problem that you don't fully  
14 understand, and it's baffling to--there are two  
15 things that baffle us continuously. One is the level  
16 of--well, the lack of familiarity with proven methods  
17 that are used all over the country, you know, that  
18 are court tested. There are school districts all  
19 over the country that use viable and legal means to  
20 desegregate and bring equity, and there seems to be a  
21 lack of willingness to investigate which is already  
22 out there. I mean, the good news is that New York  
23 City doesn't have to completely reinvent the wheel.  
24 There are models out there that work, and it's been  
25 very difficult to get people to even talk with us

1 about these models. It's quite baffling. The other  
2 thing is of course, you--it's been difficult for well  
3 known, you know, people, the experts that have been  
4 doing what--people like Michael Alves who've been  
5 working for 40 years on this issue. They can't even  
6 get data. I think the data on--you know, we don't--we  
7 can't fix what we don't know, and it has been almost  
8 an unwillingness to discuss the data. We had a very  
9 difficult time to--it took us two years to get the  
10 enrollment data for the plan that we tried to devise,  
11 you know, that we tried to create at 133, and  
12 assessment is so important. So, I think the data's  
13 the really first, great first step, but clearly there  
14 are models out there that work. There are experts  
15 that have been working on this for decades, and it's  
16 really time to bring those people and to bring that  
17 knowledge to New York City so that our separate  
18 communities and our--and generally, our whole New  
19 York City community can begin to tackle this issue.

20  
21 UJJU AGGARWAL: Yeah, just to reiterate  
22 and echo what David and Lisa were mentioning  
23 regarding data. In District Three, we have  
24 established a taskforce for equity and admissions  
25 that has been meeting together over the last two

1  
2 years for a very long time. As part of that process  
3 we establish consensus about the problem and what  
4 might be done about it. We also went about the task  
5 of gathering data. It shouldn't have taken us that  
6 long to gather the data that we did. So again, it  
7 would be really significant to push forth the access  
8 and transparency that as, again, we need about our  
9 public schools, their public entities and their data  
10 should be accessible to all of us.

11 LISA DONLAN: I would just add that there  
12 are no mechanisms right now for the DOE to really  
13 work with community, to come up with community based  
14 solutions. It's one of the negative aspects of  
15 mayoral control and centralization. I know that this  
16 administration is looking at ways, structural ways of  
17 changing that. So, I think that when we start  
18 looking at local communities providing solutions to  
19 local problems, even if they are shared problems  
20 across the city, they look different in different  
21 communities. So, I think there really needs to be a  
22 way to work together on the community level.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: And that just  
24 goes to my second and final question. You're each  
25 discussing districtwide solutions. DOE spoke about



1  
2 it. As you know, I've been helpful in a couple  
3 situations in school based solutions. You know the  
4 changes we're talking about provoke a lot of anxiety.  
5 People have gone to schools for a long time. They  
6 bought their homes based on where a schools is, and I  
7 think we'll need to have some confidence building and  
8 see that it works to have diverse excellence schools,  
9 and one thing that I think you're all saying, but I  
10 just want to make it explicit is, you know, you're  
11 proposing models where people work together, come to  
12 propose and choose these models. Whether that's  
13 through CEC structures or other collaborative efforts  
14 so that the opportunities both to build support and  
15 leadership, but also buy-in are essential to what  
16 you're proposing. You know, obviously there's a  
17 history of mandatory, you know, court imposed busing  
18 where the injustices were so big that judges said  
19 something had to be changed, you know, and at that  
20 level of injustice it's why we have a court system.  
21 At the same time, one thing that's quite appealing  
22 about the model that you're proposing is that you  
23 build that consensus, you bring it up and you know,  
24 whether you could archive it through a CEC vote as  
25 currently constructed built on the zoning lines, or

1  
2 some changes would be needed to enable districts to  
3 choose it, a model that districts in fact would  
4 choose it in collaboration with their communities.

5           DAVID GOLDSMITH: Absolutely. I mean,  
6 people want--people in our districts want diversity  
7 in our schools. I mean, our stakeholders want diverse  
8 school environments, and so it is--it's only through  
9 a community driven process that you can really create  
10 that consensus to get what everybody wants. People  
11 want excellent schools for everyone and people want  
12 diverse school environments. And the only way to  
13 really make it happen is to build it from the ground  
14 up. I think that's the lesson learned all over the  
15 country, and if we would just start looking at what's  
16 going on, the rest of the country could see that.

17           COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you.

18           CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Thank you very  
19 much. I'm going to call the next panel, and that  
20 would be Larry Cary from the Brooklyn Tech Alumni and  
21 Alumni Coalition, Horace Davis from the BT, Brooklyn  
22 Tech High School Alumni Foundation, Alyssa Stein,  
23 Brooklyn Tech, Mark Williams, Brooklyn Tech High  
24 School, and Zayshawn Gondoll [sp?] from Brooklyn  
25 Tech. Okay, and I'd like to swear you all in. If

1  
2 you would raise your right hand, please? Do you  
3 solemnly swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole  
4 truth and nothing but the truth, and to answer  
5 Council Member questions honestly? Okay, Mr. Cary,  
6 would you like to start?

7 LARRY CARY: Good afternoon.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Can you just grab  
9 that mic and turn that on? I want to make sure we get  
10 you on tape?

11 LARRY CARY: Is this on? Thank you.

12 Good afternoon Councilman Dromm. I know how  
13 passionate you are about these issues, as am I, and I  
14 sincerely and respectfully thank you for this  
15 opportunity to speak, and I mean that. That's not  
16 just words. I am President of the Brooklyn Tech  
17 Alumni Foundation. I'm also Chairperson of an alumni  
18 coalition representing 120,000 graduates. We oppose  
19 Resolution 442 because we believe in diversity,  
20 fairness and merit. There are a number of documents  
21 attached to my written testimony previously provided  
22 the committee, which I will refer to. They should be  
23 part of the record. One of them is our proposed  
24 action plan for improving diversity. It could be  
25 adopted by the city without changing state law. We

1  
2 have 1,900 Latino and African-American students  
3 currently attending the specialized schools. By  
4 putting resources into improving schools serving the  
5 African-American and Latino communities, by  
6 lengthening the time the test is administered, by  
7 funding free test prep for every student who wants  
8 it, by increasing funding for the DREAM program, and  
9 by reconfiguring the Discovery program and mandating  
10 its use. Additional numbers of students from these  
11 underrepresented communities would be admitted. The  
12 supported legislation if adopted will likely result  
13 in less diversity, not more. A white student seeking  
14 admission to the top performing schools currently  
15 using multiple criteria is about twice as likely to  
16 be admitted as he or she would be to the schools  
17 using the test. The majority of students at our  
18 schools are from the Asian--are from Asian-American  
19 families, most of them poor, and like the students  
20 attending our schools from other communities, they  
21 are likely to be from first and second generation  
22 American families. The test does not permit bias,  
23 favoritism or fraud in the decision to admit a  
24 student. By contrast, according to an audit report  
25 by the City Comptroller, at 80 percent of the audited

1 multiple criteria screened schools, "The possibility  
2 of inappropriate manipulation of student ranking,  
3 favoritism or fraud," in the process could not be  
4 ruled out. Resolution 442 supports a seriously  
5 flawed bill. It radically changes the current system  
6 and opens the door to unknown risk. A child's  
7 academic ability could be considered by the DOE to be  
8 far less significant than the combined weight of  
9 other more subjective criteria, which the DOE is  
10 permitted under the bill to include in the  
11 admission's rubric. There's a typo here. Those  
12 first three words should be "admitted." Good  
13 attendance, letters of recommendation, performance on  
14 an interview or an evaluation of a student's  
15 extracurricular activities or participation in sports  
16 and other factors could outweigh the child's score on  
17 the test. The underrepresentation of African-  
18 American and Latino children in the specialized  
19 schools is an indictment of our segregated school  
20 system which offers unequal educational opportunities  
21 based on where a student lives. The answer is to  
22 aggressively upgrade those opportunities for our top  
23 performing students from every neighborhood so the  
24 specialized and other performing schools better  
25

1  
2 reflect the population of our city. Please reject  
3 Resolution 422, and of course, I'm available to  
4 answer any questions. Thank you.

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

7 MARK WILLIAMS: Question is, what is the  
8 answer? My name is Mark Williams. I'm an alumnus of  
9 Brooklyn Tech. I'm an Assistant Principal of English  
10 at Brooklyn Technical High School, and I owe a great  
11 deal of my success to my education at Brooklyn Tech.  
12 And the greatest way that I give back is when I lead  
13 school tours, especially to young black and Latino  
14 children. And when I'm on those tours, I'm reminded  
15 of how my journey began. My aunt told me to take  
16 that test. The children who I went to middle school  
17 with talked about applying to specialized high  
18 schools. The teachers in my middle school walked us  
19 through that process. I was surrounded by people who  
20 not only had access to the information, but also  
21 encouraged me to apply. Fast forward 20 years later,  
22 I'm sitting on a panel for a summer workshop for  
23 parents about the specialized high schools, and a  
24 mother approached me. Her son was an eighth grader.  
25 She barely knew anything about the specialized high

1 schools. She didn't know anything about the SHSAT,  
2 and there were other parents who expressed to me the  
3 same exact thing. Greater access to information is  
4 essential. If we want to increase diversity in our  
5 specialized schools, we need to increase our efforts  
6 to provide information, not only during citywide  
7 workshops that are offered in central locations, but  
8 by being proactive and taking that information into  
9 the underrepresented communities. I've had the  
10 privilege of doing outreach in underrepresented  
11 communities, and two of the most common requests that  
12 I've heard are about getting more information and  
13 providing test preparation, and I'm always happy to  
14 hear about the desire to get test preparation,  
15 because I believe that the SHSAT is an objective  
16 means of offering an equal chance to every child, and  
17 every child should have this opportunity. When I  
18 walked through the halls of Brooklyn Tech the first  
19 time after I passed that test, what I witnessed were  
20 children who have an equal chance, not because of the  
21 color of their skin, not because of the neighborhood  
22 they lived in, not because of the school that they  
23 previously attended or the people that they knew, not  
24 because of any other measure, but because of the  
25

1 test. The test is fair. If our children want to  
2 score high enough they need to prepare, and we need  
3 to help them to prepare. What should be offered are  
4 more middle school enrichment programs like the STEM  
5 Pipeline Program that we actually offer at Brooklyn  
6 Technical High School to 36 middle schoolers, and  
7 what we should do is we should offer more after  
8 school enrichment programs that focus on test  
9 preparation. Academic enrichment, Pipeline Programs,  
10 access to information, and measure by examination are  
11 the answers. Resolution 442 is not the answer.

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

15 ALYSSA STEIN: Hello. I appreciate the  
16 opportunity to speak here today. My name is Alyssa  
17 Stein. My daughter's a junior at Brooklyn Technical  
18 High School. I'm current Co-President of the Tech's  
19 PTA. I also have a son in eighth grade. He turned  
20 in high school high school application last week.  
21 It's after the specialized high school test in  
22 October. So we've been living this admissions  
23 process in real time this past fall. While race has  
24 been at the forefront of many heartfelt conversations  
25 these days, it isn't and shouldn't be at the center



1 of every issue. A New York City student shouldn't be  
2 penalized by the City Council, the New York City  
3 Department of Education and potentially the New York  
4 State Legislator for making it into an issue when it  
5 isn't one. As this debate about the specialized high  
6 schools has been unfolding, I've been frustrated when  
7 people call the test or the admissions process  
8 racist. Admission is based solely on the results of  
9 a single test made of 100 questions, 50 math and 50  
10 verbal. Earning a seat is based solely on merit.  
11 Color, race, gender, sexual preference, family income  
12 levels, neighborhood borough, native country aren't  
13 part of the process. The test is biased though.  
14 It's biased towards kids who work hard to understand  
15 and learn content that's not necessarily taught in  
16 schools, content like scramble paragraphs where kids  
17 are given five sentences they have to reconstruct in  
18 logical order. That ability to read, to comprehend,  
19 to interpret is just the kind of critical thinking  
20 and problem solving ability that I've heard the  
21 principal of Brooklyn Tech say that he and his  
22 teacher work to instill in their students. Those  
23 kids who have dedicated and challenged themselves  
24 above and beyond their regular workloads should have  
25

1  
2 the opportunity to earn seats at these rigorous  
3 specialized high school as students have done for  
4 decades. The issue shouldn't be about race, and it  
5 shouldn't be about changing the test or admissions  
6 policy as a cover up for bigger challenges in our  
7 educational system, which doesn't serve all students  
8 equally. The issue is working with elementary and  
9 middle schools, which currently don't have many kids  
10 on the specialized path to help them improve their  
11 test scores and level of academic achievement. It's  
12 educating all New York City families and communities  
13 early enough in the process so students have plenty  
14 time to prepare. It's providing test prep and  
15 resources for kids who otherwise wouldn't have them.  
16 In the end, it's not about the test or admissions  
17 criteria. This is a bigger conversation about giving  
18 every single kid in New York City the opportunity to  
19 soar no matter who they are. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Next, please.

21 HORACE DAVIS: Good afternoon, and thank  
22 you for this opportunity. My name is Horace Davis.  
23 I'm an alumnus of Brooklyn Tech and Secretary of the  
24 Alumni Foundation. I'm honored to participate in  
25 this discussion about the specialized high school

1 admissions test. I believe strongly that eliminating  
2 the test absolves us of our responsibility to address  
3 where we are currently failing our black and Latino  
4 students. My admission to Brooklyn Tech through the  
5 Discovery Program and the success that I have  
6 achieved was a direct result of the quality of  
7 education I received at PS 181 and Walt Whitman  
8 Junior High School in Brooklyn. At Brooklyn Tech I  
9 majored in electrical engineering. After graduating  
10 from Brooklyn Tech in 1984, I attended Lafayette  
11 College in eastern Pennsylvania on a football  
12 scholarship. At the beginning of my freshman year,  
13 my academic advisor informed me that I would need to  
14 make a choice between football and engineering as he  
15 did not believe I could successfully pursue both.  
16 This pronouncement from my advisor as devastating. I  
17 was dependent on my football scholarship to finance  
18 my education and was committed to pursuing my dream.  
19 The strength of my academic preparation gave me the  
20 confidence to know that I could succeed at both  
21 football and academics. In 1998, of the more than 20  
22 freshman who started in the engineering program and  
23 played football at Lafayette, I was the only who  
24 graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in  
25

1  
2 engineering and played all four years of varsity  
3 football, which culminated in my participation in the  
4 NFL Draft and an invitation to try out with the  
5 Pittsburg Steelers. I am immensely proud of my  
6 accomplishment as a student athlete, and fully  
7 recognize that those achievements would not have been  
8 possible without the preparation I received at  
9 Brooklyn Tech. The underrepresentation of blacks and  
10 the Latino students in New York specialized high  
11 schools is a complex issue. One that cannot and  
12 should not be resolved by the politically expedient  
13 elimination of the specialized high school admissions  
14 test. Subjective admission criteria will lead to  
15 bias, favoritism and possibly worse. It is my  
16 opinion that we should direct our efforts towards  
17 improving the quality of the elementary and middle  
18 schools in black and Hispanic communities. Over the  
19 past three decades, I have been involved with  
20 numerous organizations committed to helping children  
21 in the black and Latino communities achieve their  
22 dreams. I have been a member of the National Society  
23 of Black Engineers, the American Association of  
24 Blacks in Energy, and I am the Founder and President  
25 of the Caribbean-American Society of New York. These

1  
2 organizations alone cannot address the fundamental  
3 issues with the deterioration in our elementary and  
4 middle school education, but working together we can  
5 address this issue in a thoughtful and constructive  
6 manner. I look forward to your questions and  
7 dialogue.

8 DISHAN GONDOL: My name is Dishan Gondol  
9 [sp?], and I'm a senior at Brooklyn Tech High School.  
10 I am part of a working class family from Benson  
11 Hurst, and I qualify for free lunch. In middle  
12 school, my local neighborhood improvement association  
13 gave out free SHSAT prep to students who were  
14 interested. I studied on my own using that book,  
15 learning the format of the test and basic techniques.  
16 We couldn't afford test prep. Ultimately, I scored  
17 well enough, and making the choice to go to Brooklyn  
18 Tech was probably the best decision I ever made.  
19 I've had the opportunity to take and succeed at  
20 courses that are part of the specialized high school  
21 experience. Every single AP course is offered at  
22 Tech, and the students use that opportunity. Tech  
23 students take the most AP exams out of any school in  
24 the nation. There are no remedial math or English  
25 classes, and I'm in classes as diverse as

1 anthropology and sociology. I am one of the first  
2 students to take the new AP Cambridge Capstone  
3 Research Course. I can even chooses courses beyond  
4 the AP level like multivariable calculus, which is  
5 the third level of calculus in college math classes.  
6 One of my closest friends went to private school  
7 before deciding to come to Brooklyn Tech. He tells  
8 me if he hadn't come to Brooklyn Tech he would never  
9 had been exposed to those outside the rich white  
10 population in his private school. Just as our  
11 curriculum is diverse, so is our student body. We  
12 have students of every ethnicity at Tech. As a  
13 student and member of the Championship Cross Country  
14 Team I've had the privilege of interacting with  
15 teammates of all race and socioeconomic backgrounds  
16 each and every day, students who earned admission  
17 through their individual merit, not income or race or  
18 connections. Diversity is a virtuous cause, but this  
19 isn't about racism. This isn't about politics  
20 either, it's about education. For over 40 years the  
21 SHSAT has served as an objective and unbiased way for  
22 students of all backgrounds to receive a world class  
23 education. There is no reason to rush for a  
24  
25

1  
2 diversity solution at the expense of logic. I urge  
3 the council to oppose Resolution 442.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.  
5 Let me just ask a couple of questions. Ms. Stein,  
6 you said in your testimony that while race has been  
7 at the forefront of many heartfelt conversations  
8 these days, it isn't and shouldn't be the center of  
9 every issue. Do you deny that having only 18  
10 African-American students in Stuyvesant High School  
11 isn't in some way an issue?

12 ALYSSA STEIN: I think it's hard to loop  
13 all the specialized schools together. The racial  
14 div--

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] I'm  
16 asking you specifically about Stuyvesant, and the  
17 facts and numbers that we got today at this hearing.

18 ALYSSA STEIN: I think that the issue  
19 isn't' about the students that are there now. The  
20 issue is not preparing students for the future. I  
21 think that the solution is not changing a test, which  
22 in the short term, I honestly don't believe will make  
23 that big of a difference. I think that kids in  
24 elementary school and middle school need to be better  
25 prepared. I think families need to be better engaged.

1  
2 I think the Department of Education needs to do a  
3 much better job of communication. When my son  
4 brought home his high school application in November,  
5 there was a blurb on it about the specialized high  
6 school test. Only the test had already happened. If  
7 parents don't get the information early enough, they  
8 can't support their kids on this journey, and so I  
9 think that--

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] So  
11 you're not answering my question though. And in your  
12 testimony, you seem to deny that that is an issue.  
13 And I'm asking very directly, do you believe that  
14 only having 18 students in Stuyvesant High School who  
15 are African-American is an issue or is not an issue?

16 ALYSSA STEIN: I think--I honestly believe  
17 the kids who earn those spots deserve those spots,  
18 and I honestly--

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Okay, so  
20 you don't see it as an issue.

21 ALYSSA STEIN: I see the education--

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] In the  
23 other parts of your testimony you said that the test  
24 is biased, though, and it's biased toward kids who  
25 work hard to understand and learn content that's not



1  
2 necessarily taught in schools. So, the way that they  
3 get their information, these kids who work hard is  
4 through test prep that they pay for basically.

5 ALYSSA STEIN: No.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: How do they get that?

7 ALYSSA STEIN: You can get a Barron's  
8 [sic] book. This--

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] You can  
10 what?

11 ALYSSA STEIN: You can get a Barron's  
12 Book. The DOE supplies a specialized high school test  
13 prep. I've known plenty of kids who did the work on  
14 their own. My son started in August doing practice  
15 tests every Saturday through the test so that he  
16 could get familiar with the format and with the  
17 content. Test prep isn't necessary, and when you  
18 look at Brooklyn Tech where there are 64 percent of  
19 kids who are coming from underprivileged homes, they  
20 can't all afford expensive test prep programs, but  
21 they do the work to get into the schools.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So you differ from  
23 all your colleagues that test prep isn't necessary.  
24 Because they all said the test prep isn't necessary.

1  
2 ALYSSA STEIN: Test prep is necessary.  
3 Paid test practice--paid test prep is not in the--

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] So how  
5 do you get the test prep? You mean, you think a  
6 student could sit with a book and prepare by  
7 themselves?

8 ALYSSA STEIN: He just said that he did.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: On their own?

10 ALYSSA STEIN: He just said that he did.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Is that how your  
12 children did it?

13 MARK WILLIAMS: Chairman, may I address--

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] I'm just  
15 wondering--no. I'm just asking Ms. Stein.

16 ALYSSA STEIN: My son attended a test  
17 prep program.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: He did.

19 ALYSSA STEIN: He also worked by himself  
20 every day for at least half an hour on test prep  
21 above and beyond, and he did practice tests every  
22 weekend starting in August because he wanted to  
23 comfortable with the material.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. And then I  
25 wanted to ask the Assistant Principal, you said that

1  
2 you believe the single test is the--should be, remain  
3 as the determining factor for admissions to  
4 specialized high schools. I guess you would then  
5 believe that the SAT should be the only factor for  
6 children going into college. That would be the next  
7 line of thinking.

8 HORACE DAVIS: I think in theory that  
9 sounds logical, but I think the issues with the  
10 colleges is completely different from the high  
11 schools anyway because I think the colleges have a  
12 completely different machine to even handle all of  
13 those multiple measures. We don't have the machine  
14 to handle all of those multiple measures. So, I  
15 think--

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] So, if  
17 we had the machines, you'd be--you'd say multiple  
18 measures were good.

19 HORACE DAVIS: I think if we had the  
20 machine for multiple measures that were objective,  
21 then I think that would be fine. I think our stance  
22 collectively is not so much that it's the test or  
23 nothing, it's just that right now the test works and  
24 we are open to a solution that works that is  
25 objective that helps to increase diversity, but we

1  
2 just feel that right now all of the other multiple  
3 measures that are being discussed are not going to  
4 result in the diversity that we are a looking for.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I believe in your  
6 testimony you also said that it was subjective  
7 evolution to students that you were opposed to, or  
8 somebody's testimony in the panel. I was wondering  
9 what do they find to be subjective.

10 [off mic]

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: What piece of the  
12 legislation is the subjective criteria that you  
13 object to?

14 LARRY CARY: The legislation is an open-  
15 ended invitation to the City of New York to add  
16 whatever criteria--

17 [interposing] CHAIRPERSON DROMM: But  
18 there's nothing cont--nothing contained in that  
19 legislation right now that is subjective.

20 LARRY CARY: That legislation allows the  
21 City of New York to add anything else it wants to, to  
22 the criteria that are set forth in that legislation.  
23 If you read it carefully, sir, it says, "shall  
24 include." When you use such language in a statute,  
25 it means there are other things you can do besides

1  
2 the things that are listed, and that legislation  
3 says, "shall include the following."

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] It says,  
5 "shall consist of multiple measures of student merit,  
6 including--"

7 LARRY CARY: Correct.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: "the point averages."  
9 So you would like to--

10 LARRY CARY: Correct.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: see more specific  
12 language.

13 LARRY CARY: Yes.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: You would be fine to  
15 have four multiple measures?

16 LARRY CARY: I think--you know, let me  
17 endorse something that was said by a previous member  
18 of a panel that was speaking contrary to the position  
19 that I have, and I don't--and I apologize for not  
20 remembering her name and what organization she was  
21 from. What she talked about the need to study what  
22 could be done objectively to create multiple  
23 criteria. I endorse that approach. I am--we're not  
24 Neanderthals. We think that given the current  
25 situation, right, the test is the best of

1  
2 alternatives, but we're not saying that this is the  
3 only thing that could ever be, but we think that its  
4 important enough to what you're doing before you get  
5 there, and this bill doesn't do that. Let me also  
6 add one other comment about his bill, because the  
7 folks who spoke in favor of the bill also expressed  
8 to the Council their request that the council seek an  
9 amendment of the bill to eliminate certain aspects of  
10 the bill, or I should say they urged you to talk to  
11 the city or urge the city to take the five schools  
12 out that were added administratively by the school.  
13 The proposed legislation that your Resolution 442  
14 supports writes into the state legislation those five  
15 other schools. In other words, it removes from the  
16 discretion of the city. It removes from the  
17 discretion of the Mayor, the ability to take those  
18 five schools out if that's a decision that the school  
19 system here wanted to make. We're not suggesting  
20 that you have to add them in. We're not saying that.  
21 We're not saying you have to exclude them, but it's a  
22 point of fact that the legislation as written that  
23 Resolution 442 supports we think is flawed. One  
24 other element of it, and that is it's true that the  
25 legislation provides for a test. Hecht Calandra

1 specifically says that the test must be, and these  
2 are the words of the statute, "competitive, objective  
3 and scholastic." That's a standard by which to  
4 measure whether the test is properly being developed  
5 and instituted, and in fact, if there was a question  
6 about whether the test was not objective, not  
7 scholastic, that would form the basis for an action,  
8 in my opinion, against the Department of Education  
9 for not abiding by state law. The bill in Albany  
10 that Resolution 442 supports only prescribes a test.  
11 There is no standard in that legislation for what  
12 kind of test it would be. For all possible reasons  
13 that test could be reduced to a competency test. It  
14 could be reduced to something that, you know, shows a  
15 certain level of proficiency as opposed to a  
16 competitive, objective, scholastic examination that's  
17 rigorous and which does differentiate in a meaningful  
18 way capacity of the student. And so, there are a lot  
19 of things about this bill that we think are flawed  
20 that are worthy of consideration and worthy of study,  
21 and we think that--I don't know why the City Council  
22 would want to urge legislation in the state to take  
23 away from the city, the right to control, at least in  
24  
25

1  
2 those five schools, whether those schools are  
3 obligated to use the test or not.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, as you know,  
5 we're in the process of figuring that out. There  
6 will be amendments before anything is passed, number  
7 one. But I do want to say I'm glad to hear that you  
8 do acknowledge that there is within the legislation  
9 the requirement for a test to be used. Some of the  
10 information that I had received prior to this  
11 hearing, in fact, stating that the test would be  
12 eliminated, and that's not necessarily the truth.  
13 Let me also compliment you on some of the suggestions  
14 that you've made here in terms of putting more  
15 resources into improving the schools, serving  
16 African-American/Latino communities, lengthening the  
17 time of the test, funding free test prep, these are  
18 all things that we want. So, I want to compliment  
19 you on that, but I do believe that we should be  
20 looking at multiple measures. You know, I think  
21 you're not too far if you're saying right now that if  
22 we had a competent test, you would also be willing to  
23 look at other measures of evaluations.

24 LARRY CARY: As long as they're  
25 objective, we would be--



1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] So, the  
3 state test scores are objective, right?

4 LARRY CARY: Well, but you know, the  
5 problem is--

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Our  
7 state tests--

8 LARRY CARY: [interposing] The answer to  
9 your question is yes, they're objective, but the  
10 problem of using the state assessment scores is  
11 because of the disparity, the demographic achievement  
12 gap on those scores, that I don't think that promotes  
13 diversity to use those tests. So, you know, there is  
14 a--in this debate--

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Right,  
16 so you're making my point.

17 LARRY CARY: Yeah, there is in this  
18 debate a conflagration of multiple criteria and  
19 diversity. There is no automatic connection between  
20 multiple criteria and diversifying the ethnic makeup  
21 of these schools. That is a leap of logic, which is  
22 not, in my opinion, born out--you can have all the  
23 multiple criteria you want. It doesn't--Townsend  
24 Harris uses multiple criteria. It's mostly Asian.  
25 Eleanor Roosevelt uses multiple criteria. It's

1  
2 mostly white. So just because you use multiple  
3 criteria doesn't necessarily have the effect that I  
4 think you and I share. I do believe, I sincerely  
5 believe that there is a problem if only 16 kids at  
6 Stuyvesant come from, you know, the African-American  
7 or the Latino community. That's appalling. It's  
8 outrageous. I can't begin to add all the adjectives  
9 in terms of how I feel about it. It's politically  
10 indefensible, which I think it is. And that's--I  
11 applaud this debate. I think this debate, while I  
12 think the bill in Albany is not the right bill, and  
13 while I think your resolution is--I would hope it's  
14 defeated. The fact that we are talking about the  
15 issue of race and achievement in New York City, I  
16 applaud, because it is appalling how bad the  
17 educational system in New York City is, especially  
18 for the African-American/Hispanic community, and I  
19 think the debate is a healthy debate, and I think  
20 it's a good debate, and I think diversity is an  
21 important issue, but I don't think this is the way  
22 you go about achieving it. And at the same time, in  
23 my remarks I said diversity, fairness and merit. I  
24 think you have to consider all three issues when you  
25 are creating public policy that will work, and I

1  
2 think it has to be the product of data and analysis  
3 and not emotion. There's an awful lot of emotion in  
4 this debate on both sides of the aisle, myself  
5 included.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. On both  
7 sides, and I must say--right. The objectives, the  
8 scoring and the pieces that are contained in the  
9 legislation seem to me to be fairly objective, but  
10 we'll continue to argue that I'm sure. Let me turn  
11 it over to my colleague Brad Lander who has a couple  
12 of questions.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you. I  
14 think that Q & A was actually helpful and  
15 instructive, and Mr. Cary, I too well--I was going to  
16 say the panel in general. I think Ms. Stein--well,  
17 let me just say, Mr. Cary, I think that the testimony  
18 you gave the conversation and meeting that we had  
19 separately on this Q & A is indeed really helping to  
20 push this conversation forward in a serious way, and  
21 to the extent that there is a real shared consensus  
22 and passion for doing something about the problems  
23 that you identify, and I think which we share a  
24 substantial analysis of the problem. That's what we  
25 try to do in hearing and the legislative process, and

1  
2 I appreciate your engagement and your passion, and I  
3 think it is meaningful and that we are working  
4 together to do something important. So, that's  
5 really useful. It was a little frustrating to hear,  
6 and I apologize, I don't remember your--

7 HORACE DAVIS: Horace Davis.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Yes. You know, I  
9 think the Chair and I have both made clear that  
10 there's no elimination of the test contemplated, and  
11 that we're not looking at subjective measures. So  
12 that's not to say that legislation in Albany doesn't  
13 have to be tightened and corrected or thought  
14 differently, but you have a set of allies on those  
15 goals and so passion is wonderful, but we'll try hard  
16 not to mischaracterize your arguments. Please, be  
17 careful not to mischaracterize ours. But I do want  
18 to ask one question. I appreciate that you've  
19 separated out the issues of diversity from the issues  
20 of a reliance on standardize testing, which may or  
21 may not have something specific to do with each  
22 other. But the two panels ago, there were sort of two  
23 students imagined, one who had fours on, you know,  
24 all their state tests, perfect attendance, fantastic  
25 grades, you know, had clearly showed up and worked

1 hard every day and scored a 90 on each section of the  
2 SHSAT, and another student who had not attended, did  
3 not have good grades. I don't really care how they  
4 did on the state tests for the purpose of this  
5 example. You can make them high or low scores. Got a  
6 99 on one and a 55 on the other. And I'm going to--  
7 we'll have to rely on their analysis that the latter  
8 student would have been above the former student on  
9 the SHSAT. If that's true, I mean, do you think  
10 that's fair? Do you support that latter student  
11 getting the one scarce slot over the former student?  
12 We don't know their race. They may or may not--you  
13 know, this may or may not have anything to do with  
14 diversity at all. It still doesn't seem to me the  
15 fairer choice to make.

17 LARRY CARY: What you're describing with  
18 the hypothetical is based on, is the fact that the  
19 test composed of one section of mathematics and the  
20 other section in language arts. Those two sections  
21 are scored separately, and then they are  
22 standardized, and then the standardized scores are  
23 added together, and all standardized scores have the  
24 effect of creating a tale. I mean, if you know  
25 statistics. And what they're describe is the

1  
2 significance in terms of how many points you get for  
3 being at the tale of a statistical distribution. In  
4 point of fact, there are very, very few children who  
5 fall into the category that you've described. There  
6 is some literature on it. I can't remember the name  
7 of the fellow, but a few years ago he did quite an  
8 interesting analysis of the SHSAT and the statistical  
9 elements in it, and the actual numbers of kids who  
10 fall into that category of getting the very highest  
11 tail in one section and then not doing extremely  
12 well, but sort of generally well in the other section  
13 falls to about 30 or 40 to 50 kids out of the 30,000  
14 who take it. So, it does exist, but it's not a huge  
15 component to the test. More troubling, quite  
16 honestly in my opinion, not part of this debate  
17 because it's really the esoterica [sic] of the  
18 examination, more troubling of this fellows analysis  
19 was the fact that in order to prevent cheating, the  
20 Department of Education administers at the same time  
21 really what amounts to four different math tests that  
22 administration, four different English tests that  
23 administration, which are all mixed and matched. And  
24 so the idea is that this way you prevent a kid from

1  
2 looking at the next kid's answer and so on and so  
3 forth.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: So, it sounds like  
5 we already using multiple measures.

6 LARRY CARY: Those scores are standard--

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: [interposing] We  
8 have four different tests.

9 LARRY CARY: Those scores are  
10 standardized. Each one are standardized.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: But they're four  
12 different tests.

13 LARRY CARY: Well, but the point he made--  
14 --the point he made, and it is--I said this is the  
15 esoterica of it, and I agree with his concern. The  
16 point he made is that the randomness associated with  
17 which four, which two out of the eight  
18 administrations, he could detect a slightly  
19 significant statistical advantage if you happen to  
20 get the right mix of those two tests. And I would  
21 agree that that's a problem, because I think the test  
22 should be the best test that can be administered.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: But--

24 LARRY CARY: For the same reason--let me  
25 just finish my remarks. For the same reason I applaud

1  
2 it, and I did this publicly. We got a little bit of  
3 press about it. I applauded the recent RFP of the  
4 Department of Education with regard to the  
5 examination, and not all of it, but there are two  
6 aspects of it that I thought were very important, and  
7 I applauded them for it. one was they are requiring  
8 that the people who put the test together test every  
9 question for bias against four cells, whites, Asians,  
10 African-Americans, and Latinos. The current test, as  
11 I understand it, really only tests for bias white  
12 versus non-white. So that the RFP that this  
13 administration has propounded will be more sensitive  
14 to those possible differences that exist, which may  
15 not be revealed in a black, excuse me, in a white  
16 versus non-white test. So I think that's a good  
17 thing, because I think we want an examination that is  
18 not biased in favor against anybody. The second  
19 thing that the RFP requires is that the questions  
20 used on the test have to be based on, the content has  
21 to be based on the Common Core curriculum, which is  
22 supposed to be taught. I don't think it's fair to  
23 test kids on material that's not taught to those  
24 kids, or at least if they showed up to class they had  
25 the opportunity to learn. I think the test needs to



1  
2 be based on that. I don't support an examination that  
3 requires that you go get test prep. One of the  
4 biggest problems my generation, his generation, the  
5 generation of Assistant Principal Williams, we all  
6 went to schools in New York City that had enrichment  
7 in the middle schools. Today, 15 percent, only 15  
8 percent of the middle schools in New York City  
9 account for 85 percent of the students who are  
10 admitted to the specialized schools. There are--so  
11 you're talking about less than 75 middle schools out  
12 of 400 that account for most of what we have. We  
13 think that has to be changed. We think that there  
14 need to be, and there were--there were when Horace  
15 went to Tech--

16           HORACE DAVIS: It was almost 50 percent.  
17 I think it was 48 percent.

18           LARRY CARY: Forty-eight percent were--  
19 right. I mean, we had feeder middle schools  
20 providing huge numbers of kids to Brooklyn Tech who  
21 were coming from those communities. They don't exist  
22 anymore. We don't have those feeder middle schools  
23 and that's a real problem. That's changed. The other  
24 thing I wanted to mention, because I know in our  
25 conversation you wanted me to talk about it, is the

1  
2 Discovery issue. Discovery exists in Hecht Calandra.  
3 It pre-dated Hecht Calandra, and it was codified in  
4 Hecht Calandra. Discovery is a program that was  
5 intended to promote diversity. That's its purpose.  
6 It takes kids who score below, slightly below the  
7 entering score, and gives them an opportunity through  
8 preparation and summer school to be prepared to do  
9 the work that's required when you get out and  
10 running. At Brooklyn Tech, you're doing college  
11 level course work the second day. The first day  
12 you're wondering around trying to figure out where  
13 you are. The second--because it's a big building.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: I've been in there  
15 more than once. The second day, the--

16 LARRY CARY: [interposing] You know.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: third day you're  
18 still trying to figure your way out around.

19 LARRY CARY: So that's the first day,  
20 just find where the classes are. The second day  
21 you're doing college level work, every single kid of,  
22 you know, of the 12-1,300 who are admitted is doing  
23 college level work form the second day they're at  
24 Tech. Now, Discovery has fallen into disuse.  
25 There's not much data on it, but I will tell you I

1  
2 have found data from the original Hecht Calandra  
3 jacket, in terms of its passage, and Discovery back  
4 in 1970 accounted for 15 percent of the students at  
5 Brooklyn Tech, accounted for--I have it here. I don't  
6 want to misquote the numbers. 21.1 percent of  
7 Brooklyn Tech, 13.9 percent at Bronx Science, 15.5  
8 percent of Stuyvesant was admitted through Discovery  
9 in 1970, not small numbers. What's changed? What's  
10 changed is you no longer have the right to bump up.  
11 Originally, if you were somebody who got admitted to  
12 Brooklyn Tech, you had missed the cutoff score for  
13 Stuyvesant. Originally in Discovery, if you  
14 qualified for eligibility you could participate and  
15 bump up into Stuyvesant, and a kid who had just  
16 missed the category of getting into Tech could bump  
17 into Tech. That was eliminated by the Department of  
18 Education over 10 years ago. Part of the reason that  
19 was eliminated--alright, okay. Well, he asked me.  
20 He wanted me to talk about it. Part of the reason it  
21 was eliminated--I'm only doing what the man asked me  
22 to do.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: But I do--look, I  
24 would love to continue this dialogue offline. We  
25 have a ton of people who signed up to testify.

1  
2 LARRY CARY: Fine, I apologize. The point  
3 is that it's a useful tool for promoting diversity if  
4 it's examined and thought about and changed.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: So you--it's a--

6 LARRY CARY: And we're in favor of that.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: You're in favor of  
8 changing the test?

9 LARRY CARY: No.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Excuse me. You said  
11 that you didn't think it was the fair, the test as it  
12 currently exists.

13 LARRY CARY: Oh, I--no, what I said was--  
14 what I said about the test is that I think a  
15 statistical analysis--

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] You said  
17 that it doesn't cover material that's taught, and you  
18 think that that has to change.

19 LARRY CARY: Yes.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So then that means we  
21 need a different test, because right now the way the  
22 test exists is that it doesn't cover material that--

23 LARRY CARY: [interposing] Well--

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: It covers--the test  
25 has material--

1  
2 LARRY CARY: [interposing] I have to  
3 retract what I said, because I don't know, I don't  
4 know if scrambled paragraphs is taught in the middle  
5 schools, I don't know.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Alright. Alright.

7 LARRY CARY: If it's not taught in the  
8 middle schools, I think that should--

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Thank  
10 you.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: I just--I think  
12 we can let this panel go if there's gratitude. But I  
13 guess I do want--in the time that--and I want to re-  
14 emphasize that I think it's been constructive and  
15 that our goal is to improve what's going on across  
16 all of our schools in terms of the--or both diversity  
17 and quality. I will say that in the time that you've  
18 been testifying, someone passed me the study, and I  
19 actually think that we could do a lot more about  
20 understanding the challenges narrowly within the--I  
21 mean, I didn't realize there were actually four or  
22 eight different tests, which you've acknowledged  
23 creates some concern. This, you know, ELA side versus  
24 math side, a bias problem. However, big or small  
25 that problem is, so I think there's a lot more

1  
2 drilling down that we could do here, but I think  
3 we've opened up a dialogue. We could continue to do  
4 it after today, and I want to--

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] I agree,  
6 and I want to say thank you to the panel for coming  
7 in, and we're going to call up the next panel. Thank  
8 you all.

9 LARRY CARY: Thank you very much.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: David Tipson from  
11 Applesseed New York, David Bloomfield from Brooklyn  
12 College, Michael Alves, Linda Tropp, and we do have  
13 some testimony for the record from Amanda Rob. We  
14 have testimony from the Council of School Supervisors  
15 and Administrators, and we have testimony from the  
16 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Center. And  
17 also testimony from Summer Bloom. We also have  
18 testimony from Dora Gelactos from the Ferrick Center  
19 for Social Justice at Fordham University. Testimony  
20 from Donna Helman, the Program Director at Goddard  
21 Riverside Community Center, and testimony from Equal  
22 Rights Advocates, François Jacobson. Testimony from  
23 Carolyn Satenbaja [sp?], I believe for herself.

24 Alright, so I'm going to swear this panel in. If you  
25 would raise your right hand, please? Do you solemnly

1  
2 swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth  
3 and nothing but the truth, and to answer Council  
4 Member questions honestly? Thank you. Would you  
5 like to start? Yes.

6           LINDA TROPP: My name is Linda Tropp. I'm  
7 a social psychologist and professor at the University  
8 of Massachusetts Amherst, and I wish to thank the  
9 Education Committee for this opportunity to share  
10 research evidence on the benefits of racial  
11 integration for reducing prejudice and promoting  
12 positive relations between racial and ethnic groups.  
13 Among other studies I've conducted what's known as a  
14 Meta-analysis for research on intergroup contact.  
15 It's essentially a quantitative integration of  
16 research studies, and our analysis concern the  
17 outcomes of contact between groups including over 500  
18 studies with more than 250,000 participants in 38  
19 different countries. Our results overwhelmingly show  
20 that greater contact between groups significantly  
21 reduces prejudice with the most rigorous research  
22 studies showing the strongest effects. Details of  
23 our analysis are included in my written testimony  
24 that I've just submitted, but just to highlight a few  
25 points. First of all, contact reduces prejudice

1  
2 largely through the mechanisms of reducing our  
3 anxieties in relation to other groups and enhancing  
4 our ability to emphasize with those who are different  
5 form us, two factors that have major implications for  
6 our ability to live together in a shared society.  
7 Contact also leads to especially strong reductions in  
8 prejudice when it occurs under optimal conditions  
9 such as when there are institutional norms and  
10 authorities that explicitly support a quality  
11 diversity and cooperation between groups. We find  
12 this both in our general analysis and also in a  
13 separate analysis where we include only studies of  
14 racial and ethnic contact between children and  
15 adolescents in K through 12 schools. Contact is also  
16 especially likely to reduce prejudice when the  
17 contact involves friendships between members of  
18 different groups. Other research also shows that  
19 cross-group friendships typically increase with  
20 greater racial, ethnic and diversity in schools and  
21 classrooms, and also longitudinally greater numbers  
22 of cross-group friendships predict more positive  
23 attitudes toward different racial and ethnic groups  
24 over time. There's also research evidence showing  
25 that simply knowing that members of our groups have



1 friends in the other group can actually promote more  
2 positive attitudes and a greater willingness to  
3 engage in future intergroup contact, such that racial  
4 integration can be beneficial both when children  
5 themselves have cross-group friendships and when they  
6 observe others cross-group friendships within their  
7 social environment. We also have evidence from  
8 ethnic minority and majority students both in New  
9 York City schools and in other school context showing  
10 that when kind proceed inclusive norms from their  
11 peers as well as support for intergroup contact from  
12 their teachers and principals that they report more  
13 positive intergroup attitudes, more comfort in cross-  
14 group contact and a greater willingness to develop  
15 cross-group friendships. Having racially integrated  
16 schools in classrooms can play critical roles in  
17 promoting positive effects of intergroup contact by  
18 providing opportunities for children from groups that  
19 are different to interact and become friends and by  
20 establishing norms that support diversity and  
21 inclusion of cross-groups. For these reasons, I  
22 encourage that New York City Department of Education  
23 to officially recognize the importance and benefits  
24 of school diversity and to report annually on  
25

1  
2 progress and efforts toward increasing diversity  
3 within its schools. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.  
5 Next please?

6 DAVID BLOOMFIELD: Yes, good afternoon.  
7 My name is David Bloomfield. I'm a professor at  
8 Brooklyn College and the CUNY Grad Center. Thank you  
9 for this opportunity to address the committee. There  
10 is no more important factor than classroom diversity  
11 to assure quality education and a just society for  
12 our children. I commend the council for its courage  
13 in addressing this issue, since we know that actions  
14 to correct segregation are almost as painful and  
15 politically dangerous as a failure to act. I have  
16 written on diversity in three recent pieces appended  
17 to my written testimony, so I will keep these remarks  
18 short. I whole heartedly support Intro 511 and Reso  
19 453 as necessary steps to focus the Department of  
20 Education's attention on schools and school processes  
21 that limit diversity. Every time a selection  
22 procedures fails to provide for diversity of  
23 academic, economic, geographic, racial, linguistic,  
24 gender and ethnic populations, the DOE should have  
25 to justify a rational basis serving a state interest

1  
2 for disproportionate inclusion of certain groups and  
3 exclusion of others. We know from studies of student  
4 progress that all gain from exposure to difference.  
5 Even if in a given school test scores go up or down,  
6 individual student scores do not decline and the  
7 humans behind those scores infinitely profit from  
8 diversities cognitive, effective and social benefits.  
9 When we ignore that in the privilege or identity, we  
10 take a step backwards in fulfilling the American  
11 promise. Current crisis of racial polarization,  
12 income inequality and sexual predation are tied to  
13 the limited opportunities and demographic isolation  
14 inherent in segregated school settings. Intro 511  
15 and Reso 453 put the council squarely on record  
16 promoting these goals. In qualifying my support for  
17 Reso 442, I note my long and vigorous involvement in  
18 the federal complaint against the current specialized  
19 high school exam, which has a clear shameful  
20 discriminatory impact against black and Latino  
21 students. The test also fails to meet modern  
22 standards of merit based admission practiced by other  
23 selective high schools and colleges nationally. The  
24 exam's single great appeal is that it sorts quickly  
25 and numerically, inducing a test centered culture

1  
2 mired in racial bigotry. But to my mind, the answer  
3 is not to amend education law 2590H1B, but to repeal  
4 it. Why should the state legislature be dictating  
5 selection procedures at all, setting in stone  
6 criteria which will always be at best imperfect? I  
7 prefer to devolve selection procedure to the city  
8 without this strange legislative strangle hold  
9 established by Calandra Hecht in 1971. Thank you.

10           DAVID TIPSON: Chairman Dromm, members of  
11 the Committee on Education, thank you for inviting me  
12 to testify on the critical issue of segregation in  
13 New York City public schools. My name is David  
14 Tipson and I am Director of New York Appleseed. New  
15 York Appleseed is one of 17 Appleseed Justice Centers  
16 around the country and in Mexico. Appleseed Centers  
17 work with probono professionals to address structural  
18 barriers to opportunity injustice with systemic  
19 solutions. New York Appleseed and its probono  
20 partner Orrick, Harrington and Sutcliffe have studied  
21 and advocated around the issue of school segregation  
22 in New York City for nearly four years. I am also  
23 the parent of a first grader in the school system and  
24 serve on the Steering Committee of the National  
25 Coalition on School diversity which is separately

1 submitting testimony today. Because of the range of  
2 expertise represented in the oral and written  
3 testimony for this hearing, my testimony today will  
4 focus on the importance of leadership from our DOE,  
5 the subject of Resolution 453. Over the last four  
6 years, New York Appleseed and Orrick have interviewed  
7 scores of experts across the city and nationally.  
8 Our goal is not to prove that the cities were  
9 intensely segregated nor to demonstrate the harms of  
10 segregation and benefits of diversity, rather we  
11 sought to understand how it is that one of the most  
12 diverse places on the planet has the third most  
13 segregated urban school system in the country. In a  
14 series of three policy briefings we examined the  
15 mechanics of school segregation in New York City.  
16 What we found ran against some of the conventional  
17 wisdom. First, although we found that housing  
18 segregation was a primary driver of school  
19 segregation, and we continued to insist on the  
20 critical importance of strong neighborhood  
21 integration policies, we found that housing  
22 segregation alone does not begin to explain the  
23 extreme levels of segregation that we see in all of  
24 our schools. Second, we found in our research and in  
25

1  
2 our advocacy that parents of all backgrounds want  
3 more diversity in their schools. What this suggests  
4 is a golden opportunities for leadership from the  
5 DOE. One of the things we heard consistently from  
6 the people we interviewed was that strong leadership  
7 on this issue from DOE would in fact dramatically  
8 improve the situation. What might this leadership  
9 look like? A clear statement of departmental policy  
10 favoring diverse schools along with a accountability  
11 standards will require principals and DOE officials  
12 to consider how each of the myriad administrative  
13 decisions they make each day lines up against the  
14 goal of school diversity. Behind the seemingly  
15 rational and objective series of school admissions  
16 priorities laid out in official DOE publications lies  
17 a wilderness of discretion in which principals and  
18 schools officials grapple with questions like whether  
19 and how to recruit underrepresented populations, when  
20 to cap enrollment, how to administer wait lists and  
21 over the counter admissions, how to market a school  
22 and to whom, how to choose between progressive  
23 pedagogues often assumed to be favored by middle  
24 school parents and those of rigor often assume to be  
25 favored by parents of low income and of color,

1  
2 whether and how to value parents of all backgrounds,  
3 how to respond to the demands of middle class parents  
4 for more conveniently located schools and programs  
5 tailored to their preferences. This is why  
6 Resolution 453 is so important. A strong statement  
7 from DOE represents a simple practical step the DOE  
8 can take to give principals, educators, Department  
9 officials and all members of our school communities  
10 the confidence to aggressively pursue strategies to  
11 increase and maintain diversity in our schools and to  
12 bring the proven educational benefits of diversity to  
13 all of our children. Thank you, again, for  
14 considering this critical issue. Please know that  
15 New York Appleseed is standing by to work with the  
16 education Committee and the Council as a whole.

17 MICHAEL ALVES: Good afternoon,  
18 Councilman Lander and other Council Members. My name  
19 is Michael Alves and I'm honored to be here today. I  
20 came down from Boston, and I'm glad John Lessor [sic]  
21 didn't go to the Yankees, but he went to the Cubs.  
22 It's kind of inside joke. Anyway--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: [interposing] So  
24 you know the Mayor shares your opinion.

25

1  
2 MICHAEL ALVES: Oh, yes, yes. You got  
3 Babe Ruth so you can't complain. Anyway, my name is  
4 Michael Alves. I'm an educational planner. I was the  
5 former State Director to Desegregation Assistance at  
6 the Massachusetts Department of Education. I worked  
7 as a Senior Equity Planner at Brow University's  
8 Educational Alliance for years, and I also own an  
9 educational planning company, and of course we  
10 specialize in the design and implementation of  
11 diversity conscious student assignment plans, most  
12 notably, what's called control choice. And what I'd  
13 like to emphasize today is I had the opportunity and  
14 the privilege in being able to work with Community  
15 Districts One, Three and 13 who you heard earlier  
16 today, and over the past three years collaborating  
17 with them with some of my other colleagues, Attorney  
18 John Britton and others around the country. And what  
19 I want to emphasize here is that my experience with  
20 these three community districts and other community  
21 district who come to the various meetings is that  
22 absolutely that there is--you can design and  
23 implement a more equitable and fair way of assigning  
24 children to New York schools than you have now.  
25 There's absolutely no question about that. You were



1 right earlier, Council Member Lander, and this is no  
2 one single silver bullet. In fact, what is needed  
3 here especially at the elementary and middle school  
4 level is a community engagement planning process  
5 where you're working within a proven framework where  
6 you're able to analyze student assignment and all the  
7 implications certainly in terms of school  
8 improvement, student achievement and multifaceted  
9 diversity, and you work within that framework and  
10 then you see--and you also be able to define what you  
11 mean by diversity and set diversity goals. And  
12 that's precisely what these three community districts  
13 are attempting to do, and I am convinced that that  
14 process, because of the attention that they're going  
15 to pay to it and the kind of diligence that they're  
16 going to commit to it, that they will come out with a  
17 more equitable recommendation for assignment than  
18 what you have. Because the biggest sin I think here  
19 in New York is neglect. It's stunning to me decades  
20 and decades have gone on here with these issues and  
21 everyone feels, well, we can't do anything about it.  
22 And I guess if you fly over New York, which I've done  
23 many times, and you look down on New York and you  
24 say, "Oh, my goodness." But when you get down to the  
25

1  
2 level I've been, walking the streets of Brooklyn and  
3 lower east side and the upper west side, and I'm here  
4 with real people in the neighborhoods, it all  
5 changes. In fact, when I went to Brooklyn I fell in  
6 love with it because I thought I was back at the  
7 north end of Boston. What I'm trying to say to is  
8 that what was spoken earlier today, absolutely, in my  
9 opinion makes perfect sense for a prudent next step.  
10 While we try to struggle and come up with policies  
11 that could impact the entire city, I think it's  
12 incredibly important to have on the ground right now--  
13 you have three community districts, I know there are  
14 others who'd like to do this, actually pilot  
15 projects. You mentioned earlier about how there are  
16 other ways to do rezoning. Well, let's find out.  
17 Let's find out if they're in choice based schools is  
18 there more equitable ways of assigning students to a  
19 choice. It's essential as a professional educational  
20 planner that before you commit something to the whole  
21 system, that you're able to at least pilot or bait a  
22 test what it is that you want to--what the innovation  
23 is. And I think the three community districts that  
24 have come forward today absolutely need the support,

1  
2 official support of the school district and the city  
3 to continue the work that they want to do. Thank you.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: So, as I said to  
5 the panel of those districts, I want to say to you as  
6 well, because you've each contributed a lot not only  
7 by coming today, and I appreciate those of you that  
8 traveled to be here, but in the work that you've  
9 done. Obviously the volumes that you produced we're  
10 not going to be able to brief panel to go through all  
11 of, but they, to me, they show, you know, thoughtful  
12 research on the need and importance both from  
13 inequity point of view and a real clear opportunity  
14 and quality point of view. That while we have  
15 imperfect a good understanding of what the drivers of  
16 segregation are, and that also an imperfect but you  
17 know, meaningful understanding of different models  
18 and how they work and how you can develop them. It  
19 sounded to me from the Department of Education this  
20 morning like there was a desire to move forward in  
21 this direction. So, we'll of course, share with  
22 them. I know you in some ways already have, but we  
23 will reshare with them these materials, and I'm  
24 hopeful that the council and the administration  
25 working together can then, you know, really in

1  
2 digging in put this to work in both exploring beyond  
3 the ground models of an array of sorts, and moving  
4 the whole system forward toward that more equitable  
5 system of assignment. Maybe just one or two quick  
6 questions. We still have so many people. It's  
7 wonderful we have so many people, but your expertise  
8 I don't want to entirely miss. Just say a little bit  
9 about the barriers that we'll face in doing that.  
10 These are complicated and I just think it's worth  
11 facing them head on. We will face some barriers and  
12 challenges moving forward through this together, and  
13 I think it's worth your talking about what you've  
14 seen and good strategies for addressing it.

15 MICHAEL ALVES: Well, that's--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: [interposing]  
17 Broadly, I mean, controlled choice being one model,  
18 but the range of other solutions we're talking about.

19 MICHAEL ALVES: Well, again, that my  
20 experience is almost 40 years now, and I've worked  
21 with well over 35, 40 school systems. We've written  
22 books. Last time I googled we're at over eight  
23 million hits. So we have broad experience. We have  
24 very battle tested and quite frankly, I think the key  
25 to what we're talking about here overcoming barriers

1  
2 is to actually have this type of community engagement  
3 planning process and also to collaborate with DOE and  
4 other stakeholders, because what's important as you  
5 go along, I use the traffic light analogy. We have a  
6 green light, an orange light and a red light. Green  
7 light is when people have a lot of consensus, and so  
8 as you move through a framework, people like for  
9 example, control choice, we grand  
10 mothered/grandfathered everybody in. Siblings go to  
11 the same school. We only deal with children who need  
12 to be assigned, and that's just a good example, and  
13 then you go through other elements of what a new  
14 policy would be, and then there could be red lights.  
15 And red lights means, uh-oh, we got an issue. We're  
16 going to have to work together. What I'm saying is,  
17 I think absent federal courts moving into the city,  
18 which is unlikely, I think you need to commit to a  
19 process where you're trying to achieve as much  
20 community consensus as you can. A good planning  
21 process is a mediating process. As you mentioned  
22 earlier, some parents bought the house or the condo  
23 they figure they got the school. That's an important  
24 interest that has to be represented during the  
25 planning process, and then the good planning process

1  
2 is a principled planning process. My experience has  
3 been if you go through that type of process, you're  
4 going to come out with a better outcome than some  
5 just dictated central office command, which is what  
6 has gone on too long in New York City. So, by having  
7 this community engagement process, but within a  
8 framework. It can't just be everyone go off and do  
9 what they want, and of course, we have experience in  
10 being able to how to facilitate those processes.  
11 That's how you deal with the difficult issues. That  
12 gives you the best opportunity to come out with a  
13 potential solution that best meets the interest of  
14 everybody.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: So, I thank you  
16 for that, and I appreciate that, and having worked  
17 just on two schools, which I'm going to ask David  
18 about, PS 133 in a minute, but the process around PS  
19 133 and around more recently the school in  
20 Kensington, new PS 437, just on those two schools the  
21 work to do good through and process and touch as many  
22 people as possible takes a long time. So I really  
23 appreciate what the district work has done, but I  
24 think it's important for DOE as well in developing  
25 its policy to think about engagement. I'm mindful

1  
2 that most of the people sitting in the audience are  
3 parents and educators. And of course, the way our  
4 hearings work, they speak later in the day. If this  
5 is going to be real, DOE needs to come out and do  
6 some kind of town hall and civic engagement in ways  
7 of incorporating a lot more people into this  
8 dialogue. For the last question for this panel,  
9 David, I just do want you to elaborate a little more,  
10 because we got some data on PS 133 and how that  
11 model's working, so it's been touted in, you know,  
12 that DOE mentioned, it's been in a news article.  
13 David Goldsmith got his shout out before, but Jim  
14 Devore [sp?] who at the time was the Chair of CEC 15  
15 is here, so I want to give him his for his strong  
16 role. That would not have happened but for strong  
17 CEC leadership. At that time, we did not have a DOE  
18 that was embracing these values and models, and it  
19 was just the threat of the CEC rezoning power that  
20 made it possible. But say one, a little bit more  
21 about that model and, you know, the evidence so far  
22 that it's working in terms of how it influences  
23 offers that get made, but to me it also points to  
24 some of the other issues I was trying to get at in my  
25 question to the DOE about what kind of additional

1  
2 supports, outreach, transportation you have to also  
3 provide if you want the schools actually to work.

4 DAVID TIPSON: So--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: [interposing]

6 Before I do that, I actually just want to thank you  
7 because Appleseed has been enormously valuable to me  
8 and my office and other members of the Council in  
9 understanding this work.

10 DAVID TIPSON: Thank you, Council Member  
11 Lander for your leadership. So, there's actually an  
12 article in the paper about this today, but it's the--  
13 you know, it's confusing because one thing we didn't  
14 know two and a half years ago when we started or when  
15 we were talking about all this was that four of the  
16 six kindergarten sections in PS 133 would become dual  
17 language programs, and that has made it harder, I  
18 think, to assess exactly what's going on, but my  
19 reading of the DOE data that was linked to in an  
20 article this morning is that the plan is working.  
21 The plan is increasing the number of offers to low  
22 income students and to English language learners, and  
23 it's holding the door open for those students over a  
24 period of time, and that's what it was designed to  
25 do. It was always designed to be paired with



1  
2 recruitment and outreach. It is, in fact, a way of  
3 ensuring the return on you recruitment efforts,  
4 because you know that if you go to a neighborhood  
5 where you--where there are a lot of low income  
6 children and the English language learners and you  
7 spend a lot of time trying to convince them to apply,  
8 that they won't get crowded out in the application  
9 process by more affluent parents who apply in greater  
10 numbers. So, you know, I think that we should be  
11 careful not to ask too much of one plan. I think  
12 it's doing basically what the leaders of the  
13 taskforce hope that it would do, but I completely  
14 agree with David Goldsmith and others that a  
15 districtwide plan is preferable to a school by school  
16 plan.

17 DAVID BLOOMFIELD: If I could add one  
18 point there. I think we have some hope now with the  
19 de-emphasis on test scores. There was a great  
20 premium for principals in the past 12 years looking  
21 for those kids who they could cream so their scores  
22 would go up. If we de-emphasize test scores, then I  
23 think principals will be more open to a diverse  
24 student population.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: And I just want  
3 to clarify that, especially in light of today's  
4 hearing, you mean that in the broadest sense.

5 DAVID BLOOMFIELD: In the broadest sense.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: There is an  
7 important conversation that I, you know, to be clear  
8 on one side of on the high school question, but at  
9 the broader systemwide level--

10 DAVID BLOOMFIELD: Right.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: of our elementary  
12 schools and middle schools--

13 DAVID BLOOMFIELD: The other two, the  
14 Intro and the Reso.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: the appetite for  
16 a de-emphasis on high stakes testing, at least as I  
17 talk to parents in New York City is overwhelming, and  
18 the appreciation to the Chancellor for addressing  
19 that systemically is quite clear.

20 DAVID BLOOMFIELD: We talked earlier  
21 about the number of selective programs and the  
22 various different school based plans for moving  
23 selective kids into those programs. I think we can  
24 do something about getting rid of those and getting  
25 some more uniformity and fairness and equity because

1  
2 principals won't have to be looking for that kid  
3 who's going to boost their test scores.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Though I will  
5 note that this is a challenge because, you know, if  
6 you--there are all the many downsides of overreliance  
7 on high stakes testing. Coming up with clear,  
8 transparent and non-subjective admissions sorting  
9 criteria is hard, you know, gets harder when you are  
10 using more--

11 DAVID BLOOMFIELD: I want to speak to that  
12 for a second if I might. There's been a lot of talk  
13 on the Stuy test side, but also on the other Reso and  
14 Intro as well about objectivity. Sometimes it's our  
15 job as educators to make subjective judgments. I'm  
16 not against subjective judgments. I'm against  
17 cheating. I'm against people who have some leverage  
18 getting in, but subjective judgments per say are very  
19 often what educators are expected to do.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Right. Good  
21 writing is hard, for example, to make an objective  
22 measure out of, and yet, we know it's pretty  
23 important for our young people to be able to do that.

24

25

1  
2           DAVID BLOOMFIELD: But we shouldn't back  
3 down from that responsibility. We should police it,  
4 but we should make responsible judgments.

5           LINDA TROPP: Just speaking to the issue  
6 of the testing for a second. You know, there's the  
7 issue of the validity of a test, you know, does it  
8 test what's actually intended to measure, but then  
9 there's also broader social environment surrounding  
10 the test, and I think that's often overlooked or  
11 mistaken such that given really subtle biases that  
12 maybe people are unaware of or may not even intend,  
13 some students may be less likely to be encouraged to  
14 take a test. Some students or communities might be  
15 less aware of the guidelines to which they can  
16 prepare for a test. And so, I think the issue of  
17 outreach, which I've heard a fair amount today is  
18 extremely critical in these discussions, and that's  
19 something I would also recommend moving forward is  
20 trying to clarify both the test itself, the material  
21 that is being tested upon and then the broader social  
22 environment that surrounds the administration of that  
23 test.

24           COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you all  
25 very much. I wish we could go on further, but it's

1  
2 wonderful we still have so many people here who want  
3 to get their time in, and we want to hear as many of  
4 it as we can. So, thank you very much. Thank you,  
5 Mr. Chair.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And thank you,  
7 Council Member Lander for covering me for a while. I  
8 had to stop into the other hearing for attendance  
9 purposes. So, thank you. Tanya Messado from  
10 Stuyvesant Black Alumni Diversity Initiative, Carole  
11 Brown, Stuyvesant Black Alumni Diversity Initiative,  
12 Kimberly Williams, Stuyvesant High School Black  
13 Alumni Diversity, and Heidi Reisch [sp?] Stuyvesant  
14 Black Alumni Diversity Initiative. Okay, if you  
15 could raise your right hand I'll just swear you in.  
16 Do you solemnly swear or affirm to tell the truth,  
17 the whole truth and nothing but the truth, and to  
18 answer Council Member questions honestly? Thank you.  
19 And let's start over here.

20 HEIDI REISCH: Yeah, here we go. Good  
21 afternoon. The Stuyvesant Black Alumni Diversity  
22 Initiative is not taking and official stance on  
23 Resolution--

24

25

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Can I  
3 just ask you for your name? Just state your name for  
4 the record.

5 HEIDI REISCH: Oh, sure. My name is Heidi  
6 Reisch.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, Thank you.

8 HEIDI REISCH: We are not taking an  
9 official stance on Resolutions 442 and 453, nor on  
10 bill 511A. We offer instead four recommendations to  
11 improve the specialized high school admissions  
12 process, a lot of which supports what some people  
13 have said today. My name is Heidi Reisch. I am a  
14 member of Stuyvesant High School's Class of 1985. I  
15 have taught math at La Guardia High School for 15  
16 years. I am a Math for America Math Master Teacher  
17 and am also a Doctoral Candidate at Columbia  
18 University's Teachers College in the field of  
19 mathematics education. Although I am not black, I  
20 support the goals of the Stuyvesant Black Alumni  
21 Diversity Initiative because it pains me that the  
22 current student body at my Alma Mater has such an  
23 embarrassingly and shamefully small proportion of  
24 black and brown students, and because I firmly  
25 believe that as a society we have a deep

1  
2 responsibility to find and nurture real intellectual  
3 talent, which can be a difficult task as opposed to  
4 granting admission to those with access to resources,  
5 which is relatively easy. For this reason, I have  
6 worked closely with the Stuyvesant Black Alumni  
7 Diversity Initiative to help increase the number of  
8 black and Latino students who are admitted Stuyvesant  
9 and the city's other specialized high schools. In  
10 2011, I recruited colleagues to provide instruction  
11 to nearly 100 black and Latino students as part of a  
12 free test prep boot camp, with the group offered at  
13 the school. As a result of this experience I became  
14 very familiar with the SHSAT and developed concerns  
15 about its fairness to test takers. I will be  
16 addressing these concerns and the need to address  
17 these issues if the new test is adopted. Sorry,  
18 recommendation one, establish the fairness and  
19 validity of any test that is part of the specialized  
20 high school admission. As is the larger alumni  
21 community, our group is divided on whether a single  
22 test should continue to be used, and so as a group we  
23 have not taken a position on that issue. Regardless,  
24 however, of whether a single test continues to be  
25 used or the admissions process is changed to allow

1  
2 consideration of more information about applicants,  
3 any test which is part of the admissions process must  
4 be fair to all applicants. As Janella Hinds noted,  
5 and Council Member Dromm reiterated, the test has  
6 changed considerably over the years, and also as  
7 Council Member Lander noted earlier, the test should  
8 not contain elements that give an advantage to  
9 students who have had access to advanced curriculum  
10 and/or to test prep. We feel that the inclusion of  
11 this scrambled paragraphs in particular favor those  
12 with access to test prep, since that is not part of  
13 any school's standard curriculum. We feel strongly  
14 that it is important to align the content of the test  
15 with what is being taught in public schools. We  
16 believe that it is possible to create a test that  
17 measures academic potential and critical thinking  
18 skills effectively without watering down the content  
19 of the SHSAT. It will be important to evaluate both  
20 the new test and its scoring methods to ensure that  
21 it actually measures what it purports to measure. In  
22 the appendix provided, I have included questions from  
23 the SHSAT student handbook that I believe are unfair  
24 with the reasons why I believe them to be unfair. In  
25 general, they either test knowledge of material,



1 which a seventh or eighth grade student on grade  
2 level would not know, or contain vocabulary to which  
3 a student on grade level would not have been exposed.  
4 As such, they do not test ability nor potential, but  
5 rather exposure to concepts and/or vocabulary. I have  
6 some examples, but I'm not going to read them. As I  
7 am a math teacher, I consider myself qualified to  
8 critique the math questions. We applaud the DOE's  
9 RFP to develop a new SHSAT as an effort to address  
10 these serious concerns which impact opportunities for  
11 students each year. Thank you very much for your  
12 time and attention to this issue.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Next, please.

15 KIMBERLY WILLIAMS: Good afternoon. My  
16 name is Kimberly Denise Williams, and I graduate from  
17 Stuyvesant High School in 2003. I'm here today as a  
18 member of the Stuyvesant High School Black Alumni  
19 Diversity Initiative, a group formed in 2010 to  
20 increase the number of students--to help increase the  
21 number of students of African-American descent who  
22 are admitted to Stuyvesant and the city's other  
23 specialized high schools of African descent, excuse  
24 me. Out of the approximately 40 black and Latino  
25 students in my class, nearly half attended the 18

1  
2 month long MSI program sponsored by the Department of  
3 Education. Collectively we represented schools that  
4 typically did not send students to the specialized  
5 high schools and we came from neighborhoods where  
6 students typically did not attend Stuyvesant. The  
7 fact that almost half the black and Latino students  
8 in my class came to Stuy by way of this program  
9 stands at the testament to its effectiveness.

10 Unfortunately, MSI has been replaced by DREAM SHSI,  
11 which does not target the same underrepresented  
12 communities, but is instead open to all qualified  
13 students who meet its income requirements. In  
14 addition, despite provisions and state law which  
15 authorize the use of a Discovery Program to provide  
16 admission to specialized high schools to  
17 disadvantaged students, neither Stuyvesant nor Bronx  
18 Science has offered this option for many years. We  
19 believe that city sponsored prep programs like DREAM  
20 and Discovery need to be reinstated at Stuy and  
21 Bronx Science and expanded at the other specialized  
22 high schools and refocus on the communities  
23 underrepresented at these schools. MSI, the program  
24 which paved the way for me and many students like me,  
25 was created in 1995 to help black and Hispanic

1 students. Enrichment courses, free transportation or  
2 rigorous lesson plans, free books, and innovative  
3 science labs were highlights of the program. Blacks  
4 and Hispanics who attended the program were more  
5 likely to get in than those who did not have this  
6 prep. In 2007, a lawsuit was filed by an Asian  
7 parent alleging the program was discriminatory  
8 because Asians and whites were held to income  
9 standards that others were not, and subsequently,  
10 aspects of the program changed. Instead of providing  
11 access to students from communities underrepresented,  
12 the program focused on students who were economically  
13 disadvantaged. After these changes, black and Latino  
14 students became a small fraction of those who  
15 participated. Black enrollment at SHSI decreased to  
16 less than 90 percent of its numbers the year before.  
17 Hispanic enrollment in the program was decreased by  
18 more than half, while Asian enrollment more than  
19 doubled. One of the new qualifications for students  
20 was free lunch, and having been through the program  
21 as a student, a volunteer and an employee, I know  
22 that there were several students whose household  
23 income was slightly over the free school lunch  
24 threshold who need extra help. They're in the same  
25

1  
2 neighborhoods and schools as free lunch recipients  
3 receiving the same limited resources. Those in the  
4 middle who needed help and would have benefitted were  
5 subsequently left out. The current format of DREAM  
6 is still new so there aren't years of results to  
7 analyze, but it's imperative that we glean lessons  
8 from the early years. Discovery is another program  
9 that needs to be re-evaluated. Students who miss the  
10 cutoff scores could be prepped during the summer  
11 before 9<sup>th</sup> grade, but since the program's been  
12 altered and eliminated at Stuy and Bronx Science  
13 because of an inability to select the most  
14 competitive students, it's become a huge problem,  
15 allowed the schools to pick students that only missed  
16 the admission by a few cutoff points. It would be  
17 hard to argue that a student falling a few points  
18 short who could attend Bronx Science is not fit to  
19 attend Stuyvesant. My experience at Stuy and with  
20 the various prep programs with the school are  
21 anecdotal but representative. I graduated from  
22 Harvard College in 2007, and yes, admissions policies  
23 there have changed, but they still have noticeable  
24 tendencies. Of all the New York City schools  
25 represented in my college class, there were only two

1 dominating public schools, Stuyvesant High School and  
2 Brooklyn Tech. There were less than 30 students  
3 accepted from these schools and four were members of  
4 my contingent three of the Math Science Institute at  
5 Stuyvesant High School. By today's standards, it's  
6 very likely we wouldn't qualify for the DREAM program  
7 or have the opportunity to go through Discovery. Our  
8 attempts to make progress should not leave students  
9 behind. The rest of my testimony's in the package.

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

13 TANYA MESSADO: Hi, my name is Tanya  
14 Messado. I like to first thank you for allowing us  
15 to provide testimony. I am a graduate of Georgetown  
16 Law School and Yale University, but before that, I  
17 was a graduate of Stuyvesant High School, Class of  
18 1993. The African-American and Latino student  
19 representation at that time was roughly 10 percent.  
20 Now, it is a fraction of that today. The number is  
21 now three percent. Like many of my Stuyvesant  
22 classmates, I grew up in a working class family.  
23 Mine in particular immigrated to New York from  
24 Jamaica in the 60's. My mother was a single parent  
25 who spent her days teaching at a preschool in Crown

1  
2 Heights and her evenings commuting to Long Island to  
3 attend college courses. Mine is a familiar story.  
4 When I arrived at Stuyvesant in the fall of 1989, I  
5 knew that was effort to have the potential to open  
6 doors but I never realized how impactful the  
7 experience could be. In the spring of 1993 I received  
8 a full scholarship offer to Yale University and my  
9 other classmates of color would in turn receive  
10 offers to Cornell, Harvard, Barnard and NYU. We are  
11 now lawyers, doctors and entrepreneurs. The list of  
12 notable Stuyvesant alumni is extensive. The United  
13 States Attorney General Eric Holder, Deputy Mayor of  
14 New York Richard Buery, activist Lucy Liu [sp?], Tim  
15 Robbins, Paul Visor [sp?], political advisor David  
16 Axelrod, Success Academy's Eva Moskowitz. I now  
17 reside in Crown Heights, District 17, and I have a  
18 two year old daughter who will be entering pre-k in  
19 the fall of 2016. I would like for her to have the  
20 same educational opportunities as I was afforded,  
21 however, District 17 historically one of the lowest  
22 performing school districts in New York City. The  
23 options for gifted and talented programs in the  
24 neighborhood are few and far between. Although  
25 gifted and talented programs are a pipeline into the

1  
2 specialized high schools, there are limited numbers  
3 in African-American and Latino school districts. In  
4 an ideal world, all neighborhood middle schools would  
5 adequately prepare the students to compete for spots  
6 in the city's top high schools. The reality of the  
7 situation is starkly different. Only a small number  
8 of public schools in the city labeled by some as  
9 feeder schools send hundreds of students to  
10 Stuyvesant and the other specialized high schools  
11 each year, while many public schools send none. Two  
12 years ago there were no gifted and talented  
13 kindergarten classes in all of district 17. If your  
14 child happened to win a spot in a program, you had to  
15 try your luck finding a seat for them outside of the  
16 districts. This year in District 17 we still have  
17 only one. In comparison, District Two has 12 gifted  
18 and talented programs. It is no surprise then that  
19 District Two counts five feeder schools, while  
20 District 17 counts none. The majority of Stuyvesant  
21 students arrive from feeder schools are concentrated  
22 in a handful of neighborhoods through the city, and  
23 none of those feeder schools are located in  
24 historically black and Latino neighborhoods. The  
25 disparity in applications to the gifted and talented

1  
2 program by race and socioeconomic status is dramatic.  
3 As of 2011, roughly 70 percent of all New York City  
4 public schools students were black and Latino, but  
5 more than 70 percent of kindergarteners in gifted and  
6 talented programs are white or Asian. If we continue  
7 to use the example of District 17 in Brooklyn  
8 compared to District Two in Manhattan as an example  
9 of this disparity, District 17 covers predominantly  
10 African-American or working class neighborhoods of  
11 Prospect Heights, Crown Heights and East Flatbush.  
12 District Two, on the other hand, encompasses some of  
13 the wealthiest neighborhoods in New York City, the  
14 east side south of 97<sup>th</sup> Street and the west side south  
15 of 59<sup>th</sup> [sic] street. In 2014, only 300 students in  
16 District 17 sat for the kindergarten gifted and  
17 talented test. In District Two, that number was over  
18 1,800. Of that number, 449 students in District Two  
19 were given offers compared to only 37 from District  
20 17. The low number of students who sit for this test  
21 in African-American and Latino neighborhoods can be  
22 attributed partly to the fact that parents are solely  
23 responsible for navigating the gifted and talented  
24 process on their own. In contrast, before the  
25 current day setup, gifted programs relied primarily



1 on teachers and in-school testing to identify these  
2 academically talented students. Unfortunately,  
3 information regarding gifted programs is  
4 insufficiently disseminated to parents in lower  
5 income and minority school districts. As a result,  
6 low income and non-white students are severely  
7 underrepresented in these feeder schools and in  
8 gifted and talented programs citywide. I want my  
9 child and all children living in African-American and  
10 Latino neighborhoods to have the same opportunities  
11 for educational achievement as their white and Asian  
12 peers. The gifted and talented program as currently  
13 set up has created a segregated, two-tier public  
14 schools system which effectively predetermines a  
15 child's chances at success, based solely upon the  
16 school district in which their families reside. We  
17 need to raise that bar so that challenging programs  
18 for gifted children are available in all school  
19 districts and not just a few. Thank you.

21 CAROLE BROWN: Hi, my name is Carole  
22 Brown. I'm a Co-founder of Stuyvesant's Black Alumni  
23 Diversity Initiative. We've coordinated information  
24 sessions in seventh grade test prep scholarships  
25 since 2010. I grew up in Ms. Cumbo's district. My

1 children attended kindergarten through eighth grade  
2 on variance in Mr. Levin's district, District 33.  
3 Black communities have a couple of obstacles on the  
4 road to specialized high schools, lack of awareness  
5 and decreased access to accelerated middle school  
6 programs. When I entered Stuy, coming from an SP  
7 class that no longer exists, nearly everyone knew a  
8 specialized high school alumnus because of the  
9 numbers. I was one of 80 seniors of African descent,  
10 10 percent of the graduating class. My Brooklyn Tech  
11 friends were among 40 percent graduating there, but  
12 when my children recently graduated from Brooklyn  
13 Tech themselves, they're at less than 10 percent.  
14 During outreach, we in the Diversity Initiative are  
15 asked the same questions over and over. What's so  
16 special about Stuyvesant? Where is it? I don't want  
17 to go to Bed-Stuy. Are there AP classes. Do  
18 children go to good colleges like the private schools  
19 go? Is there a fee to take the test? Black  
20 Stuyvesant student who just recently graduated said,  
21 "I didn't even know that you could get test prep for  
22 the SHSAT, I just took the test." A couple of  
23 parents, "When my child finishes DREAM program, they  
24 automatically get a seat in Stuyvesant." From  
25

1 principals that we've contacted, "I don't have any  
2 students to refer to you. You know, we go from grade  
3 six to 12, don't you?" More questions, "What is the  
4 website address for the Department of Education?  
5 What test scores do you need for Bard and Midwood?  
6 My guidance counselor just mentioned this school  
7 yesterday, do you need high grades? My guidance  
8 counselor won't let me register for the test, what  
9 can I do? How much is Stuyvesant's tuition each  
10 year? My child's uncle says that blacks are not  
11 allowed at Stuyvesant." These are not questions that  
12 you would ever hear from families at the five middle  
13 schools that eventually make up 30 percent of  
14 Stuyvesant students, but thanks to private schools  
15 diversity push, our target families certainly know  
16 all about Exit [sic] or Dalton [sic] Shote [sic] and  
17 other private schools. Thus, the conversations in  
18 some communities are different than in other  
19 communities. Most don't know that just two gifted  
20 and talented schools feed 200 freshman into Stuy, 200  
21 out of 900 freshman, and these feeders are not  
22 diverse in regards to African-American and Latino-  
23 Americans so they would not know. They don't know  
24 that these feeders offer high school Regents biology,  
25

1  
2 history, languages, algebra, geometry, Regents in  
3 middle school. Feeders send advanced students to  
4 Stuy ready to jump into AP and unique challenging  
5 classes that give Stuy that great reputation. Is the  
6 lack of awareness why all the best high schools  
7 specialized and selective non-specialized all  
8 experience the five to 50 percent drop in black  
9 students just since 2008? Our target families don't  
10 know these non-specialized high schools either  
11 because the highly selective non-specialized high  
12 schools picked from the same less diverse middle  
13 school feeders. My children's middle school in  
14 District 15 was not a gifted and talented program,  
15 but it had a Regent's algebra program, and the kids  
16 in their classes talked about the best high schools  
17 all the time. You got to know to apply. And you  
18 know, competition for a good middle school is intense  
19 when you see 3,000 gifted students apply for 66 sixth  
20 grade seats in the Brooklyn School of Inquiry, but  
21 those seats will be filled by those who have already  
22 been in Inquiry since kindergarten. Many gifted and  
23 talented schools fill their seats in kindergarten,  
24 and there are not enough GNT seats in the entire city  
25 for gifted kindergarteners. Mark Twain is a great

1  
2 six through eight school, but its science program  
3 accepts only three percent of its applicants. And  
4 these two examples can be a burden to commute to  
5 everyday from most black communities. Our few  
6 current black Stuyvesant students were among the few  
7 in a gifted and talented feeders or private and  
8 parochial schools. We communicate with middle school  
9 parents who check homework, limit TV and electronics,  
10 pay for arts classes and athletics, put children in  
11 church groups every Sunday, but they're still under  
12 informed.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: well, thank you. I'm  
14 going to have to cut it a little bit short because I  
15 have 15 panels after this, so but I don't want you to  
16 think that we haven't heard what you had to say. I  
17 look at your recommendations, the fairness and  
18 validity of the test, the opportunity for exposure to  
19 GNT programs, the Discovery Program as well, and  
20 outreach to families in underrepresented communities.  
21 So, we will make sure that that is included in our  
22 discussions as we move further, and I just want to  
23 say thank you for coming in and giving your testimony  
24 today. Thank you very, very much.

25 CAROLE BROWN: Thanks for having us.

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

KIMBERLY WILLIAMS: Thank you.

HEIDI REISCH: Thank you.

TANYA MESSADO: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, the next panel will be Triana D'Orazio, Committee for Hispanic Children, Randi Levine, Advocates for Children, Mitch Wu, Coalition for Asian-American Children and Families, Liz Rosenberg and New York City Public Org, Jane Lee Delgado, New York City Public. Okay, I'd like to swear you in. If you could raise our right hands. Do you solemnly swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, and to answer Council Member questions honestly?

UNIDENTIFIED: I do.

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

TRIANA D'ORAZIO: Good afternoon. My name is--

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Good afternoon.

TRIANA D'ORAZIO: My name is Triana D'Orazio, and I am the Policy and Communications Associate for the Committee--

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Can you  
3 move that mic a little closer to you so we can--yeah.  
4 Alright, great.

5 TRIANA D'ORAZIO: Certainly. For the  
6 Committee for Hispanic Children and Families or CHCF.  
7 I thank the Committee Chair and the other members of  
8 the Committee on Education for giving me the  
9 opportunity to participate in this hearing. Since  
10 1982, CHCF has combined education and advocacy to  
11 expand opportunities for children and families and  
12 strengthen the voice of the Latino community. We  
13 work to involve families in all aspects of their  
14 children's education by providing workshops on the  
15 Common Core standards, college access, school  
16 partnerships, and by implementing program activities  
17 that build and foster positive relationships between  
18 families and their children. CHCF believes that the  
19 most effective way to support Latino families is by  
20 building upon their existing strength and fostering  
21 self-sufficiency, but self-sufficiency can only go so  
22 far when hindered by both overt and nuance  
23 discrimination. This is why CHCS supports the  
24 proposed Introduction and both resolutions. Gathering  
25 and posting data by grade level as proposed by

1  
2 Introduction 511 would help to accurately track the  
3 number of Latino children and English language  
4 learners, the number of homes where a language other  
5 than English is spoken, their socioeconomic  
6 backgrounds, their progress, and the supportive  
7 services they receive but still lack. The data  
8 collected would also help determine the exact numbers  
9 of enrolled students in charter schools through  
10 admission criteria and methods of enrollment, their  
11 ELL student population and their wait lists among  
12 other issues. While CHCF is not against charter  
13 schools, they are privately run schools using public  
14 funds and public spaces. It is necessary that they  
15 be held accountable for inequities in enrollment for  
16 more bilingual and dual language programs and provide  
17 transparent financial structures. While data  
18 collection is a necessary and useful first step, the  
19 information gathered must be used to create and  
20 reinforce programs that work for and reach all  
21 children. On Resolution 453, we believe that our  
22 children need to be exposed to other ethnicities,  
23 experience cultural diversity, learn other languages  
24 and know that there is a greater world beyond their  
25 boroughs. This exposure can only strengthen the



1  
2 bonds among our students and increase trust in levels  
3 of engagement within communities, mollifying any  
4 existing or potential racism. We must include civil  
5 rights standards and acknowledge that education is a  
6 basic human right. CHCF agrees also with Resolution  
7 442, that the city's specialized high schools  
8 admissions test are inherently unfair and exclude a  
9 major section of the city's student population,  
10 mainly African-Americans and Latinos. Admittance to  
11 these specialized schools must revolve around other  
12 factors such as overall performance in school,  
13 teacher input and student interviews. We need to  
14 elevate our children above whatever socioeconomic  
15 barriers impede them from overcoming an admittance  
16 policy exemplified by a single potentially racially  
17 discriminatory entrance exam. Thank you for your  
18 time.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

20 RANDI LEVINE: Good afternoon and thank  
21 you for the opportunity to speak with you. My name  
22 is Randi Levine, and I'm Policy Coordinator at  
23 Advocates for Children of New York. For more than 40  
24 years Advocates for Children has worked to promote  
25 access to the best education New York can provide for

1  
2 all students, especially students of color and  
3 students from low income background. Recent events,  
4 including those in Ferguson, Cleveland and here in  
5 New York City have reminded us of the need to come  
6 together as a community to address the racial  
7 disparities that exist in public education and in our  
8 public lives. We recognize the potential of public  
9 education in New York City to bring together  
10 different groups of children and promote the values  
11 of diversity, inclusion and opportunity. Among the  
12 benefits of integrated schools is the ability for  
13 children to learn firsthand at the earliest ages that  
14 all lives matter. Advocates for Children works on  
15 behalf of children who are at greatest risk for  
16 school-based discrimination or academic failure due  
17 to poverty, disability, race, ethnicity, immigrant or  
18 English language learner status, sexual orientation,  
19 gender identity, homelessness or involvement in the  
20 foster care or juvenile or criminal justice systems.  
21 We thank the sponsors of proposed intro 511 for  
22 broadening the bill to include many of these groups  
23 of students. We are alarmed by the disparities in  
24 educational outcomes for the groups of students  
25 included in the bill. For example, on the 2014 ELA

1 test, while nearly 50 percent of New York City's  
2 white and Asian students performed proficiently, only  
3 18 percent of black and Hispanic students performed  
4 proficiently, only 6.7 percent of students with disabilities,  
5 four out of five of whom are black or Hispanic  
6 perform proficiently, and only 3.6 percent of English  
7 language learners performed proficiently. The  
8 proposed bill will give us important data about which  
9 populations of students are accessing which schools  
10 and which programs and will help inform  
11 recommendations for policy change. Ensuring that  
12 students from diverse backgrounds have access to high  
13 achieving schools and programs is critical, but it's  
14 only one step. As the City Council strives to ensure  
15 that every school and program in the city serves a  
16 diverse group of students, the city and DOE need to  
17 prepare schools to provide an excellent education to  
18 these students. Schools need resources, training,  
19 and the development of specialized programs to meet  
20 the needs of all students, including English language  
21 learners and students with disabilities. Just this  
22 week, we received a call from a parent of a  
23 kindergarten student of color. The student has a  
24 disability and is living in a shelter. The student  
25

1  
2 is enrolled in a popular school that has been touted  
3 as high achieving, but the school was not prepared to  
4 meet the student's needs, and placed the student on a  
5 truncated schedule, allowing the student to only  
6 attend school for three hours a day since September.  
7 To improve school outcomes, we need to make sure that  
8 we do more than just give students access to  
9 different schools, we need to change what is  
10 happening inside those schools to ensure they are  
11 prepared to serve diverse groups of students. Thanks  
12 for the opportunity to speak with you today, and  
13 thanks for focusing on this important topic.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next,  
15 please. Mr. Wu?

16 MITCHEL WU: Good afternoon. My name is  
17 Mitchel Wu, and I'm submitting testimony on behalf of  
18 Sheila Fineberg [sp?] the Executive Director of the  
19 coalition for Asian-American Children and Families or  
20 CACF. For 25 years CACF has been the nation's only  
21 Pan-Asian children's advocacy organization and works  
22 to improve the health and wellbeing of Asian Pacific  
23 American, or APA children and families in New York  
24 City. I would like to thank Chair Dromm and members  
25 of the Education Committee for holding this important

1  
2 oversight hearing on diversity for public schools  
3 system. We believe that all the bills and  
4 resolutions scheduled for today's hearing is a step  
5 toward a stronger diverse and equitable learning  
6 environment for all of our youth. Often now, when  
7 APA students are mentioned in discussion in public  
8 schools education, it is to praise them for being  
9 smart, successful, for attending specialized high  
10 schools, for being self-sufficient, and therefore do  
11 not require additional support or assistance. While  
12 this perception of APA students as high achieving  
13 minorities continues to prevail in certain circles,  
14 these beliefs are far more from the reality in which  
15 many APA students live. They face a multitude of  
16 challenges that decrease their ability to compete  
17 with their peers academically. I think about 14  
18 percent of New York City's public school education  
19 system at risk APA students often come from immigrant  
20 and low income families, face language barriers and  
21 are the first generation in their families to attend  
22 American public schools and pursue higher education.  
23 Noting this achievement gap that exists within our  
24 community, more specifically<sup>7</sup> while only five percent  
25 of APA students in New York City attend the top

1 three specialized high schools, there are many more  
2 APA students who failed to meet these educational  
3 standards and struggle throughout their academic  
4 careers. These students find themselves isolated and  
5 marginalized and often lack the necessary support to  
6 navigate the education system and access services  
7 critical to becoming competent, well adjusted, stable  
8 [sic] minded adults. Consider these facts.

9  
10 Currently, one out of four APA students in public  
11 schools education does not graduate on time or at  
12 all. CACF will be testifying today on the need to  
13 improve education equity for all students in New York  
14 City public schools while highlighting the challenges  
15 that APA youth base. Regarding Intro 511, the CACF  
16 supports the reporting of racial and socioeconomic  
17 data, particularly on the crucial need to include the  
18 disaggregation of data. Thank you Council Member  
19 Lander. We are pleased to see that the specific  
20 mention to report the segregation of language is  
21 spoken, place of birth, as well as the over counter  
22 status. Currently right now the APA community New  
23 York City, we are the, by percentage, the fastest  
24 growing group, nearly doubling in size every decade  
25 since 1970. Now, it is very important to track our

1 dynamic and growing population so we assure that each  
2 emerging communities is receiving the proper  
3 linguistic and culture appropriate services for  
4 families to support their children to succeed in  
5 schools. The reporting of such data will also  
6 contradict prevailing notions that APA is a  
7 homogenized well to do group. CACF supports  
8 Resolution 442 for Albany to consider additional  
9 terms and measures to increase the diversities in  
10 these high schools. CACF promotes accessible and  
11 structure free academic support programs for all  
12 communities in New York City to be able to  
13 participate if the youth have interest in applying  
14 for specialized high schools. CACF has signed onto  
15 NAACP's LDF complaint back in 2012, citing that we  
16 believe in promoting more equity in the specialized  
17 high schools, which the current SHSAT process is not  
18 providing. We do however, urge that before  
19 determining what better terms and measures are, a  
20 taskforce of experts on education diversity and  
21 testing should be brought together to help inform the  
22 council and the Department of Education on their  
23 recommendations. I just want to take a quick moment  
24 to talk about the impact of specialized high stake  
25

1 testing on the community as well. As been mentioned  
2 before about all the test prep academies and for  
3 profit Cram [sic] schools that had been popping up in  
4 our various Asian-American communities, and for many  
5 low income immigrants, they have been kind of  
6 anthologized [sic] and conditioned to believe that  
7 that is the way to go, and we also feel like been  
8 it's been preying [sic] on these inner [sic]  
9 communities in which they have to take on additional  
10 incomes just to pay for these expensive, you know,  
11 preparatory classes. It is also detrimental and not  
12 promoting a well-rounded college readiness atmosphere  
13 for our immigrant youth as well. And lastly, we  
14 support Resolution 453 with one recommendation. I'm  
15 also including a ethic studies curriculum in order to  
16 promote that diversity environment, with the  
17 inclusion of these different histories, experiences,  
18 and contributions of our historically minority  
19 communities including the LGBT community and women's  
20 studies. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

23 LIZ ROSENBERG: Hi, I'm Liz Rosenberg,  
24 and I'm the Director of NYC Public. I would like to  
25 testify in support of all the resolutions and the



1 intro before us today, and I thank the Council  
2 Members who are sponsoring these bills and  
3 resolutions very much, and now that I see how your  
4 work lives really go, wow. Thank you for being here  
5 now. Okay, I had the pleasure of teaching at  
6 Brooklyn Tech during a period when it was far more  
7 racially diverse. I was trying to find the exact  
8 numbers to give you a snapshot of Tech from 1996 to  
9 1999, but I did not, but I did find one statistic.  
10 When I was teaching at Brooklyn Tech, 37.3 percent of  
11 my students were African-American. Now, only eight  
12 percent of the students at Tech are African-American.  
13 So, I want to absolutely dispel any myth that  
14 African-Americans cannot excel on the SHSAT. They  
15 do. They have, and they can certainly excel at  
16 schools like Brooklyn Tech and the other specialized  
17 schools. But something has shifted and I cannot  
18 fully explain exactly what, and whatever that shift  
19 is, a preponderance of paid SHSAT test prep, focus on  
20 state ELA exams and so much test prep that some of  
21 the students that might have excelled on the SHSAT  
22 just don't want to take another exam. And I think  
23 when people talked about feeder schools, I think  
24 looking very specifically at the feeder schools that  
25

1 used to feed into Brooklyn Tech and Bronx Science and  
2 Stuyvesant, what's going on there? Is there tons and  
3 tons and tons of test prep for the ELA and math  
4 exams? That's a question I have. Or, is it perhaps  
5 that the elimination of the Discovery Program which  
6 came out today as a really big thing, and that was 10  
7 years ago. And was talking to you about when I was at  
8 Tech 15, 16 years ago. This students I had in the  
9 late 90's were not overly tested. My point is that I  
10 cannot identify the reasons that 1,000 African-  
11 American students--just get that in your head, 1,000-  
12 -just imagine them. They just kind of disappeared  
13 from the hallways? They're not there anymore, and  
14 I'm sure that there has been a big decrease in the  
15 Latino population at Tech too. I just couldn't find  
16 those statistics today of the exact numbers, but  
17 literally that could be another 800 students that are  
18 just not walking those halls anymore. With very few  
19 exceptions, all my Tech students regardless of race  
20 and class were up to the challenge of the work we all  
21 put in front of them. They went on to be successful  
22 in college, and they had an opportunity to see how  
23 far their minds could stretch. I guarantee you that  
24 if specialized schools admit students who are ready  
25

1  
2 for tough work as determined by grades and actual  
3 student work. Those students will excel at Tech.  
4 They have in the past and they will again. The  
5 criticism I have heard today that multiple measures  
6 can equal nepotism and/or that it could lead to  
7 whiter more wealthier student bodies is a serious  
8 caution. Those who are charged with fixing the  
9 broken specialized high school admission system must  
10 also take this into consideration. I'm going to go  
11 really quick now. I also encourage the very powerful  
12 alumni associations of these three specialized  
13 schools powered by Nobel Laureates and billionaires  
14 to use the full amount of their social, political and  
15 economic capital to address the issue that they have  
16 said are so important today, improve educational  
17 options for African-American and Latino students.  
18 They have had years and years to work to address  
19 these issues of inequity. They have seen the roughly  
20 1,000 African-American students leave the building as  
21 it were every year and disappear from the hallways.  
22 In a recent book, how--should I--can I go on a little  
23 bit longer? Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Just a little bit.  
25

1  
2 LIZ ROSENBERG: Okay. In a recent book,  
3 Carol Buras [sp?] right, "without deliberate attempts  
4 to include policies that diversify schools by race,  
5 class and achievement as some magnet and EDOP [sic]  
6 schools do, choice is a little more than tracking of  
7 at large." Given the segregation that we see in our  
8 city, it's clear that Buras is not exaggerating. She  
9 points to unequal access to guidance around middle  
10 and high school admissions processes and the actual  
11 structures of individual school methods for accepting  
12 students. She goes on to say, "By 2010, screened  
13 schools and limited unscreened schools which have no  
14 academic balancing requirements dramatically rose  
15 while EDOPs declined by 25 percent." And I think that  
16 decline has continued. It was a very, very important  
17 point. We heard Ms. Ramirez today state that EDOP  
18 schools are an important part of the strategy to  
19 ensure that schools are more diverse, but there are  
20 increasing--but they are--but are they increasing the  
21 number of EDOP schools? Are they restoring EDOP  
22 admissions to the 25 percent or more that change  
23 their admissions policies? One other strategy I would  
24 encourage the DOE to consider is a public  
25 deliberative democratic new school design process

1 that engages community members and parent from all  
2 backgrounds. Our organization, NYC Public, held a  
3 community engagement lab/charrette with CEC One in  
4 which the community members came together to dream up  
5 a new school. It was an incredibly diverse group of  
6 parents and they all agreed that they wanted to see a  
7 new school with a controlled choice diversity  
8 admissions policy. These community members now feel  
9 ownership over this school. These types of true  
10 community engagement processes for new schools can  
11 create a context whereby a diverse body of parents is  
12 invested in the school from the get-go. My testimony  
13 is a bit of a hodge-podge, but my overall message is  
14 that there are many more things the DOE can be doing  
15 to ensure that all of our schools become more  
16 diverse. More students must have access to engaging  
17 and enriching education which they--where they meet  
18 and learn from a diverse student body and a diverse  
19 group of teachers and administrators.  
20

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

22 LIZ ROSENBERG: Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Last but not least.

24 JANE LEE DELGADO: Thank you very much  
25 for your patience. My name is Jane Lee Delgado. I'm

1  
2 a social science researcher and an organizational  
3 psychologist. My background is in large scale  
4 assessment and evaluation. Ten years ago I moved to  
5 New York City to work as a research scientist at the  
6 College Board. For the last five years until very  
7 recently I was the Dean for Institutional  
8 Effectiveness and Strategic Planning at a CUNY  
9 Community College. Currently, I'm working with NYC  
10 Public, and I am studying the New York school system.  
11 I know I know very little. What I would like to do  
12 today is speak to particularly 442 and I may be able  
13 to shed some light on the issue of attendance. My  
14 particular area of expertise is data and research  
15 evidence, so that's mostly what I'll be talking about  
16 there. At the college level, study after study has  
17 shown that high school GPA is a better predictor of  
18 college performance than the scores from standardized  
19 tests. Colleges know that they must look at multiple  
20 indicators for making admissions decisions. At the  
21 high school level, researchers have looked at key  
22 middle school performance measures to predict high  
23 school grades and graduation. They have found that  
24 opportunity to take algebra by the eighth grade,  
25 attendance and middle school GPA are all significant

1 predictors, and there's a list of the researchers  
2 there. More recently, the University of Chicago  
3 Consortium on College and Chicago school research in  
4 2014 compared multiple middle grade indicators of  
5 readiness for high school success. I think they had  
6 about 20. They found that earlier test scores were  
7 strong predictors of high school test scores, but  
8 they were weak indicators of high school grades and  
9 completion. The best single predictor of high school  
10 achievement and graduation was course grades or GPA.  
11 GPA was more important than test scores and  
12 background factors such as race, SES or gender in  
13 making a prediction. "Eighth grades core GPA was the  
14 strongest single predictor of on-track status and  
15 earning high grades in high school." Alansworth  
16 [sic] 2014. The Chicago study also found that middle  
17 school attendance was more predictive of high school  
18 passing rates than were test scores. It was more  
19 important to improve attendance rates during middle  
20 school time than it was to improve test scores during  
21 that period for subsequent success. When attendance  
22 rates and GPA were combined, the two indicators  
23 together provided the optimal prediction. They had a  
24 lot of indicators in the pool, and those two together  
25

1 provided the optimal predictive power. Adding  
2 additional indicators did not provide more  
3 information. According to the 2014 SHOT [sic]  
4 Foundation report by Holesman [sp?] in almost half of  
5 New York City community school districts students  
6 have little opportunity to learn in a high performing  
7 school, but in every middle school in New York City,  
8 grades still matter. Grades reflect effort,  
9 persistence and study skills. They reflect the  
10 academic behaviors and habits of mind required to  
11 "Come to class regularly, get assignments completed,  
12 participate, study, and deliver high quality work day  
13 after day." In my position as a research and  
14 planning dean at a CUNY Community College, very  
15 diverse and almost exactly representing the  
16 proportions of the population of New York State, I  
17 saw repeatedly that even if some students got low  
18 scores on the entrance exams if they saw themselves  
19 as good scholars with good GPAs in high school, they  
20 would work hard to make up the opportunity gap. You  
21 could see the differences in one semester in the  
22 data. I urge you to give all good students a chance  
23 to catch up and excel in a specialized high schools.  
24 They'll show you what they can do. Please support  
25



1 this resolution. And support of resolution 453, I'm  
2 going to skip this. You've seen it. I thought the  
3 resolution effectively summarized the research. I was  
4 very impressed. I'm going to skip to the situation  
5 of choice in New York City. Because opportunities  
6 without preparation, entitlement and engagement is  
7 meaningless. Families shouldn't have to choose to  
8 attend good schools that meet the needs of the  
9 children. A good education is a human right to which  
10 all New Yorkers are entitled. Shouldn't be a scarce  
11 resource available only to those who can successfully  
12 navigate a complex market based system. This  
13 resolution adds an important strategic objective to  
14 the mission for education in New York City. We know  
15 how to reach all students. The research is in. It  
16 just takes the political wheel and the strategic  
17 allocation of resources. We also know how resources  
18 follow savvy parents, and we know that we have to  
19 make a commitment to every student in every community  
20 district that will ensure that each school has  
21 equivalent advocacy. When we embrace ambitious  
22 public goals such as those presented in this  
23 resolution and then demand a plan of action, we raise  
24 the potential for significant and lasting social  
25

1  
2 change. We are lucky to be New Yorkers. I am  
3 particularly lucky to be a New Yorker. We have the  
4 opportunity to utilize the unique strengths of the  
5 most amazing city in the world and demonstrate how  
6 the future can work for everyone. Please support  
7 Resolution 453. Thanks for bringing it up [sic].

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, thank you and  
9 thank you to all of the panelists, and thank you Ms.  
10 Delgado for focusing on the issue of attendance, and  
11 certainly I'd like to talk more with you about that,  
12 and the importance. I think some people had a little  
13 giggle when the state legislators were here--

14 JANE LEE DELGADO: [interposing] It's  
15 empirical [sic].

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah, and don't  
17 really fully understand how important that really is  
18 to as a predictor of student achievement. And I also  
19 want to take the opportunity to say I couldn't agree  
20 with you more on the issue of choice. When you don't  
21 have much to choose from there's really no choice,  
22 unless you make all schools good schools, then we're  
23 not really succeeding with our children. I want to  
24 say thank you to all the panel. I also want to thank  
25 Mr. Wu for mentioning LGBT, because that is also a

1  
2 big part of diversity, and I didn't get the  
3 opportunity to say that today, but I'm glad that you  
4 did. So, thank you to all the panelists, thank you.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Mr. Chairman, as  
6 this panel is switching over, let me just--you guys  
7 can go. Oh, call the next one and I'll say this--

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, very good. So,  
9 Halley Potter from the Century Foundation, Dan  
10 Rubenstein from the Brooklyn Prospect Charter School,  
11 Miriam Nunberg from the Brooklyn Urban Gardens  
12 Charter School, and Eric Joerss from the New York  
13 City Charter Center.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Just on that last  
15 panel, I want to flag one thing sort of in some ways  
16 lost between the district level elementary school  
17 work and the specialized high school conversations.  
18 We've probably underdeveloped the conversation about  
19 middle schools here, and as part of the long term or  
20 obviously that's a place where choice without very  
21 clear attention to what's driving choice and screens,  
22 I think, are a big driver of the lack of diversity  
23 and one thing that we should be paying attention to.  
24 And also for folks who may find it opaque, many of  
25 you know this, but the Council's powers in

1 relationship to the DOE are quite limited. So, it's  
2 not that we've chosen not to have a piece of  
3 legislation here that would require or demand a  
4 particular set of steps. That power does not belong  
5 to us as result largely of mayoral control and hence  
6 the resolution calling for the goal of the bill,  
7 calling for the data but not something that  
8 establishes a set of steps that we are not legally  
9 permitted to require. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, and also just  
12 a--if I can read it into the record, Adam Stern has  
13 submitted a testimony. Michael Weiss has also  
14 submitted testimony, and the Bronx High School of  
15 Science Parents Association has submitted testimony  
16 for the record. And with that, I'm going to swear  
17 you in. if you'd raise your right hand, please? Do  
18 you solemnly swear or affirm to tell the truth, the  
19 whole truth and nothing but the truth, and to answer  
20 Council Member questions honestly?

21 DAN RUBENSTEIN: I do.

22 ERIC JOERSS: I do.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. So who  
24 would like to begin? Alright.

25

1  
2 DAN RUBENSTEIN: Thank you, Council  
3 Members for hosting these hearings. My name is Dan  
4 Rubenstein. I am the Co-founder and Executive  
5 Director of Brooklyn Prospect Charter School. These  
6 meetings are especially poignant given the times and  
7 issues surrounding cultural understanding and  
8 creating more inclusive communities. I'm sure what  
9 is apparent by the conclusion of these hearings is  
10 that school integration is challenging and complex,  
11 thus, there is no one solution. If anyone tells you  
12 today or at any time that there is one solution to  
13 integrating schools, they're most likely not working  
14 in schools. Today, I am speaking as the leader of  
15 Brooklyn Prospect Charter School, a school that was  
16 founded on the idea that students should sit side by  
17 side in classrooms that come from different  
18 backgrounds. There are numerous well documented  
19 social and academic benefits, we've heard from some  
20 of those people today, of a purposefully integrated  
21 classroom. Brooklyn Prospect Charter School is also  
22 a member and a founding member of the National  
23 Coalition of Diverse Charter Schools, which was  
24 established because charter schools can and should  
25 contribute to solving the historic challenge of

1  
2 integrating public schools. Currently there are 15  
3 charter schools in New York City which are working  
4 together to promote policies of school integration.  
5 Diverse charter schools generally see getting an  
6 integrated student population as only half of the  
7 solution. The other half is succeeding with an  
8 incredibly diverse population. No small feat, as any  
9 of these schools can tell you. Given the current  
10 level of racial and economic isolation in general, I  
11 will focus on reducing the racial isolation in public  
12 schools, all public, all schools public and charter,  
13 district and charter, excuse me. Number one, there  
14 should be less emphasis on where a student lives and  
15 their academic background in choosing a school. In  
16 New York City all public schools are assigned--assign  
17 their students in one of three ways, geographic  
18 zones, where a student lives determine where he or  
19 she goes to school, academic achievement, how a  
20 student performs on a test, audition, interview or  
21 grades determines where the student goes to school,  
22 or lottery, random assignment. I would recommend  
23 more emphasis on the third method of student  
24 assignment lottery with less emphasis on the first  
25 two, rigid zones and student achievement. The most

1  
2 racially and isolated--economically isolated schools  
3 in the city tend to draw students from a small  
4 geographic zones with narrow academic backgrounds. I  
5 found it interesting today that we're talking so much  
6 about specialized schools, which is actually a very  
7 small percentage of the overall student population  
8 here in New York City. it is possible under state  
9 law to preference a lottery for the purpose of  
10 increasing diversity among this student body. It's  
11 also federally legal as well. Some charter schools  
12 currently reserve seats for students who live in  
13 public housing. Others give lottery preference like  
14 mine, like the one that I run to students who qualify  
15 for free and reduced price lunch. There are both  
16 districts and charter schools which affectively use  
17 weighted lotteries to integrate their student  
18 populations, and this option would be available and  
19 encouraged at more schools, charter and district.  
20 This is an area that charter school leaders, myself  
21 included, and the DOE administration, the current  
22 administration and the previous administrations have  
23 begun to collaborate, and I look forward to continue  
24 collaboration. And finally, nothing changes in  
25 public education without public data. For better or

1  
2 for worse, little changes in public education without  
3 transparent and published data, similar to how a  
4 school's test scores are published today, the New  
5 York City Department of Education and the State Board  
6 of Regents should create a statistic for racial and  
7 economic integration similar to the methodology used  
8 by the Civil Rights Project of UCLA, a study that was  
9 discussed much today and has been much publicized in  
10 the press. It also should be noted that Nashville,  
11 Tennessee public schools has recently taken the lead  
12 nationally in incorporating this type of statistic  
13 into all their public schools, district and charter.  
14 By using a diversity index, school leaders and  
15 communities will know where they stand. It would  
16 also send a message that we do value students sitting  
17 side by side in the classrooms who come from  
18 different backgrounds. We can understand better what  
19 methods are working for different types of schools  
20 and the public will be more informed about which  
21 schools are succeeding in increasing and maintaining  
22 diversity. Thank you.

23 MIRIAM NUNBERG: My name is Miriam  
24 Nunberg, and I'm the Co-Founder and Co-leader of the  
25 Brooklyn Urban Garden Charter School. We call



1  
2 ourselves BUGS. Thank you for the opportunity to  
3 testify today on such an important civil rights issue  
4 facing the New York City schools. I'm speaking to  
5 support the passage of resolutions 511 and 453. BUGS  
6 is an example of a school with lottery based  
7 admissions, a diverse and vibrant student body and an  
8 academic program designed to support all learners.  
9 We believe that the use of lottery is an effective  
10 method of ensuring a student body reflective of the  
11 multifaceted population of New York City. We founded  
12 our school to address the need for additional high  
13 quality middle school seats in our district. We were  
14 committed to developing a school based on equitable  
15 access, especially since we are located in a district  
16 where the DOE middle school application process is  
17 dominated by competition for a few selective schools.  
18 The demographic study that we conducted as part of  
19 our chartering process demonstrated that the local  
20 middle school with selective and subjective entrance  
21 criteria such as interviews or auditions were all  
22 disproportionately white and high income when  
23 compared to the district's population. We did not  
24 want to contribute to that problem, but rather aim to  
25 provide a high quality education to a heterogeneous

1 student body without regard to past performance.  
2 Admissions by lottery seem the most direct way to  
3 ensure equal access for all applicants and we chose  
4 that charter route in part due to the legal  
5 obligation that charters accept students via lottery.  
6 As a charter, we are required by the state to  
7 document our efforts to attract and retain high needs  
8 students. We report on our progress in this regard  
9 annually and actively seek out students who have  
10 disabilities or English language learners or come  
11 from backgrounds, from low income backgrounds. We are  
12 proud of the fact that we fully welcome students from  
13 these categories and serve them well alongside high  
14 performers from more privileged backgrounds. The  
15 Brooklyn Urban Garden Charter School is currently in  
16 its second year of operation. Our student body is 18  
17 percent white, 32 percent African-American, 26  
18 percent Hispanic, seven percent Asian, and 17 percent  
19 mixed race. Approximately 50 percent of our students  
20 qualify for free and reduced price lunch, and 27  
21 percent receive special education students. Our  
22 students reflect a wide range of academic performance  
23 levels and run the gamut from very high performers to  
24 those below grade level. As educators, we consider  
25

1 the obligation to differentiate instruction to be at  
2 the core of our professional responsibilities to  
3 students. We designed our program to challenge and  
4 support our vastly different learners in an  
5 integrated, heterogeneous and engaging environment.  
6 As a result of the heterogeneity of our school, a  
7 number of our parents have expressed a real  
8 appreciation for both the diversity of our student  
9 body and our capacity to meet our students where they  
10 are academically and socially. A number of families  
11 with a variety of racial and ethnic compositions have  
12 found a home at our schools, as have those who come  
13 from less traditional family structures. The variety  
14 of backgrounds represented by our student body means  
15 that accepting, appreciating and respecting those  
16 with vastly different life experiences and  
17 perspectives is frequently discussed in our school  
18 community. Harmonizing these perspectives is not  
19 always easy, but we would not have it any other way.  
20 In closing, the Brooklyn Urban Garden Charter School  
21 fully supports the City Council's efforts to promote  
22 increased diversities in the public schools and can  
23 attest to the benefits offered by the use of lottery  
24  
25

1  
2 based admissions and a genuine commitment to serving  
3 all learners.

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

6 HALLEY POTTER: My name is Halley Potter,  
7 and I'm speaking to you today as a researcher and  
8 advisor to the National Coalition of Diverse Charter  
9 Schools. Thank you for holding these discussions and  
10 bringing much needed attention to diversity in our  
11 schools. My colleagues in diverse charter schools  
12 and I would like to share our support for Proposed  
13 Introduction 511. We believe that having better data  
14 on enrollment and diversity is an important first  
15 step toward creating integrated schools across the  
16 city. However, we encourage the Council to go  
17 farther with this legislation is possible. In  
18 addition to requiring data reporting, we would like  
19 to see the Department of Education to define goals  
20 for a diverse enrollment and rate every school  
21 against those definitions. One district that has  
22 developed this sophisticated diversity plan of this  
23 kind in recent years is Metropolitan Nashville Public  
24 Schools in Tennessee. Nashville now evaluates every  
25 school whether district or charter on meeting

1  
2 diversity goals for race and ethnicity, income,  
3 language and disability. We also heartedly support  
4 Resolution 453. A large body of research shows the  
5 academic, social and civic benefits of integrated  
6 schools. We would welcome affirmative strategies in  
7 each community school district to encourage school  
8 diversity. We also hope that these strategies would  
9 include providing ways for charter schools and  
10 district schools to work together in offering more  
11 students the chance to attend integrated schools.  
12 New research being released today from the Tapestry  
13 Project shows that as a whole, the city's charter  
14 schools have a greater level of economic integration  
15 than district schools as a result of the random  
16 admissions lottery process used in charter school.  
17 Two-thirds of charter schools are mixed income,  
18 falling within 15 percent of the citywide average for  
19 low income enrollment compared to just one-third of  
20 district schools. Any new school diversity  
21 strategies must address the role that geographic and  
22 academic admissions requirements play in perpetuating  
23 segregation, and they should provide more  
24 opportunities to use lottery based admissions with  
25

1  
2 preferences aligned to diversity goals when necessary  
3 in public schools of all kinds.

4 ERIC JOERSS: Good afternoon, Mr.  
5 Chairman, Council Member Lander. My name is Eric  
6 Joerss. I am the Deputy for Government Affairs at  
7 the New York City Charter School Center. In the  
8 interest of time, I won't read my testimony, but will  
9 just say a few quick remarks. The Center is  
10 supportive of both 511 and 453. We would like to see  
11 in 511 a couple of additions. Charter schools are in  
12 there, which is perfectly appropriate. Charter  
13 schools should be in there. We would also like to see  
14 the bill expanded, though, to require the reporting  
15 about policy details about the admissions criteria to  
16 individual districts and charters. The steps the DOE  
17 is taking to prevent socioeconomic bias or favoritism  
18 in subjective admissions decisions, and the total  
19 estimated time and commitment and time spent and  
20 pages submitted required to participate in the  
21 admissions process for these given selected schools  
22 for this elective district schools. We say this  
23 because we know the charter issue is contentious. As  
24 charter folk, we hear a lot about our student  
25 populations and who we take in. Most of the

1 conversation we've heard today about district schools  
2 and how you get in, whether it's the selective,  
3 whether it's the middle schools would be absolutely  
4 illegal for a charter to do it, right? Charters take  
5 in kids who knock on their door, fill out a one page  
6 application. That is the law. It is unlike most of  
7 the district. That's not to say not since that we're  
8 better than you, but simply that we are a more  
9 accessible option particularly in lower income  
10 communities than quality district schools, and we  
11 think that the reporting coming out of your bill,  
12 Council Member, would actually show some evidence  
13 that way and let us deal a little bit more in data  
14 and fact and a little bit less in the kind of  
15 slinging and innuendo that too often mark the debate  
16 that we often--that mark the debate. We also think  
17 Council Member Torres's Resolution 453 is a really  
18 good idea particularly in that the idea of looking at  
19 diversity in rezoning. That's an issue with this  
20 council zoning has quite a bit of power, your land  
21 use power. That's something that could potentially  
22 do a lot of good because we know as people have  
23 brought up, segregation in New York City schools is  
24 largely real estate driven, and charter schools being  
25

1  
2 unzoned schools are part of the solution to that and  
3 don't fall into it. It doesn't matter where a  
4 charter in, it's accessible to any kid that applies  
5 to it and winds up getting in from the lottery, which  
6 brings me to the last point, which isn't on the  
7 legislation, but more of a request. Where we often  
8 see Council Members is standing on the other side of  
9 a UFP or AQE rally explaining again why a community  
10 does not want a charter school to come in. These are  
11 often communities of more means than where the  
12 average charter schools are, which tend to be in  
13 poorer communities, and obviously it is meant that  
14 way. This is New York City, but if you look at it  
15 from the point of view of the parents that do want to  
16 attend charters, the people that are running these  
17 schools, seeing a bunch of parents stand up and say  
18 basically, "These kids aren't from our neighborhood  
19 and we'd like to keep our building for our kids,  
20 thank you very much." Doesn't look very nice to those  
21 people. It doesn't do a lot of good once those  
22 schools, if they do wind up getting co-located and do  
23 have to integrate and share space. This is not to say  
24 we are without our warts, that we do everything  
25 right, that we are always on our best behavior, but



1  
2 there's a role that I think the Council and community  
3 leadership can play in making diversity an easier  
4 goal to achieve between charter and district and  
5 within the system as a whole, and we would love to  
6 see--we would love for you to keep that in mind when  
7 you do stand up against some of these co-locations or  
8 even before co-location, just when the charter does  
9 want to come into a neighborhood. Thank you very  
10 much.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Mr. Joerss, that is  
12 one of the most bizarre twists of statistics that  
13 I've heard yet in my Council Committee hearings. By  
14 your own admission, you're working in districts, and  
15 this is what I hear on the advertisements on radio  
16 and television, with mostly black and Latino  
17 students.

18 ERIC JOERSS: Uh-hm.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Now you're saying that  
20 you're working or you're trying to get into  
21 community--I don't get what you're--it is that you're  
22 actually saying.

23 ERIC JOERSS: I can explain it to you if  
24 you'd like.

25 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.

1  
2 ERIC JOERSS: Okay, charter schools  
3 tended to start out in Harlem, in the South Bronx and  
4 in Central Brooklyn where the districts--

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] So what  
6 have you done to increase the diversity in those  
7 schools?

8 ERIC JOERSS: where the schools tended to  
9 be failing.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I'm sorry?

11 ERIC JOERSS: Where the school--where the  
12 district schools tended to not be up to the par that  
13 a lot of parents want, hence the popularity of  
14 charters in those districts. As charters started to  
15 look at neighborhoods that weren't traditionally  
16 serving those same low income kids we have seen a  
17 push back, be it--

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Not  
19 because of the diversity issue--

20 ERIC JOERSS: Bay Ridge be--

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Wait a  
22 minute. Not because of the diversity issue, but  
23 because of the overcrowding issue. That's the heart  
24 of the push back. You're twisting--

25 ERIC JOERSS: Except--

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: this argument in a way  
3 that's really not statistically true or--

4 ERIC JOERSS: You can say that, but the  
5 opposition to colocations and to charters coming in  
6 has come in schools where the blue book showed there  
7 was a lot of room and it has been in fairness in one--  
8 -

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Listen,  
10 it's very hard to get--

11 ERIC JOERSS: But the blue book showed--

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing]  
13 statistics to begin with from the Charter School  
14 Center on anything.

15 ERIC JOERSS: I don't believe you've ever  
16 asked.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: It really is. I mean,  
18 I can't get numbers. They don't come in. They don't  
19 really give testimony here. You know, I'm talking  
20 about, you know, especially some of these charter  
21 networks, and then to come in and twist this around--  
22 let me ask you this question. How many of Eva  
23 Moskowitz's kids get into specialized high schools?

24 ERIC JOERSS: That you take delight in  
25 the fact that her kids didn't make the specialized

1  
2 high schools is very bizarre, Councilman. Nobody  
3 here is talking--

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Excuse  
5 me?

6 ERIC JOERSS: about Success Academy. We're  
7 talking--

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] This  
9 hearing is on diversity in the public schools, and  
10 it's about a resolution--

11 ERIC JOERSS: [interposing] Why would you  
12 want to brag about her kids not getting into  
13 specialized high schools?

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I'm asking why.  
15 What's--you can help to tell me now why, what we  
16 should do to help Eva Moskowitz get her kids into  
17 specialized high schools. I think that would be an  
18 admirable goal. Why aren't her kids able to get into  
19 specialized schools?

20 ERIC JOERSS: I think we've all been in  
21 this room long enough to not turn this into a farce.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: What?

23 ERIC JOERSS: So, I'll respectfully  
24 decline to answer that.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: A farce? Well, I  
3 don't-- you know, that's the first time I've been  
4 called having a farce. So, I think you really should  
5 reconsider your words, and I think you should  
6 reconsider your testimony because much of it is  
7 untrue. Thank you very much.

8 ERIC JOERSS: Thank you.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Mr. Chairman?

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: First of all,  
12 what I want to say is though indeed you may often see  
13 most on the, you know, on the lines--

14 ERIC JOERSS: [interposing] And I'm sorry,  
15 I didn't mean you specifically.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: UFT, the--

17 ERIC JOERSS: Bigger picture.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: The Brooklyn  
19 Prospect and BUGS probably see me most at their  
20 schools, which I go to regularly in part because they  
21 do believe in the diversity goals that they described  
22 on the panel, and because they engage with our CEC  
23 and with our community in developing their goals,  
24 their school, and their integration and inclusion  
25 with our process. On the other hand, at least for

1 mem, it's like a tale of two kinds of charters  
2 because at the same time the charter that's proposed  
3 next year for District 15, 100 percent of the people  
4 that came to testify at the hearing were opposed to  
5 it. They didn't even bother showing up at this one  
6 this time. They have targeted the two spaces in the  
7 district that we would like to use to create more  
8 inclusive diversity and that space will be taken if  
9 they seek to enforce their rights under the new state  
10 policy that they achieved with some help, and so I  
11 think you have to understand there is openness, on my  
12 part to be sure, and I think your members will attest  
13 to it to supporting charters that are part of a  
14 community process and value the goals of diversity,  
15 but you--the biggest threat in my opinion to the  
16 space for inclusive and diverse schools in the space,  
17 the scarce space that we have in District 15, is  
18 coming from Success at possibly at the expense of one  
19 of your own members, but certainly at the expense of  
20 the space we need to build out that diversity. So, I  
21 think there really is room for a partnership here,  
22 but the broader policy context is a troubling one,  
23 and I don't think that's because of the advocacy of  
24 Chair Dromm. So, I just want to be clear.  
25

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And ditto here. I  
3 attended a meeting of District 24, 28 and 30 where  
4 Success Academy didn't even bother to show up to  
5 explain why they wanted space in the district. So,  
6 there's a definite tale of two charters going on  
7 here. I have a good charter school in my district.  
8 This is not anti-charter. It's the Renaissance  
9 Charter School. I've spoken with you about that, but  
10 you're continued insistence on twisting the facts for  
11 many if not most of the charter schools is something  
12 that I don't think you should really come into this  
13 committee and do to be honest with you. I just don't  
14 see why you do that. Thank you. Anyway, I  
15 appreciate the fact that the panel has come in.  
16 Thank you very much. We're going to call the next  
17 panel.

18 ERIC JOERSS: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Ayana Bahine [sp?],  
20 Families at Arts and Letters K to Eight, Sarah  
21 Camiscoli, Integrate New York City for Me, Timothy  
22 Martinez, Integrate New York City for Me, Francisco  
23 Correjo [sp?], Integrate New York City for Me, and  
24 Julissa Cruz [sp?], Integrate New York City for Me,  
25 Samantha Ramos, Integrate New York City for Me.

1  
2 Alright, good. Let me swear you in. If you'd all  
3 raise your right hand, please. Do you solemnly swear  
4 or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and  
5 nothing but the truth, and to answer Council Member  
6 questions honestly?

7 [off mic]

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, who would like  
9 to start?

10 SARAH CAMISCOLI: Hi, my name is Sarah  
11 Camiscoli and I'd like to thank you for inviting us  
12 all to speak today. I'm the Coordinator of Integrate  
13 NYC for Me, and I'm an ESL teacher of six through  
14 12<sup>th</sup> graders at Bronx Academy of Letters. The  
15 possibilities that I believe in for New York City  
16 schools are wholeness, inclusion, integration, and  
17 equity, and I believe that every individual in this  
18 room has a leadership role in achieving those  
19 possibilities. To give you some background,  
20 Integrate NYC for Me is a project that emerged from  
21 these lovely people in my tenth grade advisory. Each  
22 week we would meet and students would share what  
23 occurred to me as the impact of segregation of people  
24 and resources in the New York City Department of  
25 Education. They complained of oversized classes,



1  
2 teachers with back to back schedules unable to meet  
3 regularly for extra help, lack of free space in  
4 collocated buildings with both public and charter  
5 schools, student's schedules filled with Regents prep  
6 classes and requirements and alarming numbers of  
7 disciplinary referrals and an overall feeling that  
8 they were being treated unjustly. And I, as a teacher  
9 who teaches oversized classes and a teacher with back  
10 to back programming across six grade levels, as a  
11 teacher who struggles to make extra time for help, as  
12 a teacher who shares a classroom with four other  
13 teachers, and who sometimes feels like referrals are  
14 my only option, I felt like they were resisting  
15 powerfully against injustice, and I wanted to stand  
16 with them and knew I had administration that would  
17 support us in doing so. Today I stand here with five  
18 powerful, creative, warm, brilliant and young  
19 individuals, their amazing parents, and an endlessly  
20 supportive administrator. Standing with these  
21 brilliant leaders, I can ensure you that the  
22 inequities you are reading about in your data are  
23 much more about how the abundance of resources and  
24 individuals are currently being segregated in the  
25 Department of Education rather than any imperfection

1  
2 or deficiency that may be believed that our schools  
3 may have. Or, as some have suggested today, lack of  
4 test prep in our middle school. My hope today is  
5 that you hear the possibilities and the words of each  
6 of our student leaders here. I ask you to listen to  
7 them as you would any Council Member, a policy maker  
8 or policy leader, and you consider their wisdom as  
9 you discuss the need for the DOE to prioritize  
10 diversity, for there to be explicit data reported on  
11 that progress and for specialized schools, those with  
12 the most resource and innovation to be made more  
13 accessible to them and their families. I hope our  
14 work today provides you with a new framework to  
15 understand the data, the campaigns and the requests  
16 that are emerging of you in the wake of our city  
17 being named the most segregated in terms of our  
18 educational mechanics. I hope that you can see it is  
19 in the wisdom of these students and their experiences  
20 and what they will share today that you will find the  
21 possibilities of wholeness and integration and a new  
22 future for your schools. Thank you.

23 TIMOTHY MARTINEZ: Good afternoon Council  
24 Members and thank you for inviting me to speak. My  
25 name is Timothy Martinez. I'm a sophomore at Bronx

1 Academy of Letters. I'm here to represent Integrate  
2 NYC for Me. The possibilities I believe in for New  
3 York City schools is totally equality across race,  
4 class and gender. The reason is because I feel that  
5 everyone should have a lot of exposure to many  
6 opportunities and people. Why should some schools  
7 have more advantages than others? Why should it be  
8 up to me to look for extracurricular activities  
9 outside my school? Why should other kids have  
10 opportunities such as go down their hall and see all  
11 these opportunities, and I have to travel to get the  
12 exact same things even if I get them? There are many  
13 reasons to provide total equality across race, class  
14 and gender in schools, but the one that I select to  
15 talk about today is nutrition. The topic I selected  
16 to research on the inequality in New York City  
17 schools is nutrition because I will have to say, it  
18 is one of the most biggest problems in New York City  
19 public schools. I sometimes ask myself, why do I have  
20 to wake up in the crack of dawn to be in school when  
21 I know I won't get provided with a decent meal? Why  
22 is that other students get provided with hot meals  
23 and we get provided with frozen and reheated meals  
24 for breakfast and lunch? Throughout my research I  
25

1  
2 found that public schools like mine in the South  
3 Bronx have terrible lunches. The free and the  
4 reduced lunches that student receive are frozen and  
5 defrosted. Many students in my school feel like the  
6 food is not fully cooked. Is that right? This  
7 effects how we can learn in class because the food is  
8 not nutritious. We cannot focus. This is a huge issue  
9 of inequality. I hope my research and opinion shared  
10 today have helped to think about how important it is  
11 to address equality of school for all students across  
12 race, gender and class. Thank you again for this  
13 opportunity.

14 SAMANTHA RAMOS: Hello. Good afternoon,  
15 Council Members, and thank you for inviting me to  
16 speak. My name is Samantha Ramos and I am a tenth  
17 grader at Bronx Academy of Letters, and I am a  
18 student intern with Integrate NYC for Me. I believe  
19 that NYC schools are the bedrock for the future of  
20 this nation. The way you raise a human being is the  
21 way that they become. When an educator is teaching a  
22 class they are teaching doctors, presidents,  
23 policeman, lawyers. I dream that we can share the  
24 future of our nation because the future of our nation  
25 is us. I researched music and art. Music and art is

1  
2 what keeps us New Yorkers sane. Music is what the  
3 people turn to and art is the way to express. It  
4 teaches creativity, confidence, perseverance, focus,  
5 and collaboration. I live in the Bronx and my school  
6 is only two blocks away from where I live. There's  
7 another high school that is one block away from where  
8 I live. I did some research on it. My school has  
9 two pianos, but we still have no music classes and no  
10 band room. The other school I researched did in fact  
11 have instruments used and a band room. I believe all  
12 students should have music and art. I also think  
13 that it is important for New York City Department of  
14 Education to make diversity and equality a priority  
15 in terms of Resolution 452, because as the future of  
16 NYC, we need to practice equality and maintain  
17 diversity. The New York City--the future of New York  
18 City shouldn't be a society that is composed of  
19 hatred and animosity. It should be a society that's  
20 used to other people who are like them. To address  
21 proposal 442, I feel that it is essential for New  
22 York State to change how students are accepted into  
23 specialized schools with an abundance of resources  
24 and guidance because some kids are rejected, and in  
25 the end, all children, all students should have

1  
2 proper resources and guidance. I hope that my  
3 assessments and research shared today has impacted  
4 and brought us all to a semblance of perception and  
5 gratification. Thank you for this opportunity.

6 JULISSA CRUZ: Good afternoon, Council  
7 Members and thank you for inviting me to speak. My  
8 name is Julissa Cruz. I am a sophomore at Bronx  
9 Academy of Letters and I am a student intern with  
10 Integrate NYC for Me. The dream I have for New York  
11 schools is total equality across race, class and  
12 gender as well as acceptance in schools of many  
13 different types. The topic I selected to research on  
14 the inequality in New York schools is girls sports  
15 teams. Through my research I found that public  
16 schools like mine in the south Bronx don't have many  
17 sports teams, especially female sports teams. The  
18 sports teams that you will find in many schools are  
19 basketball, volleyball, baseball and finally,  
20 softball. South Bronx public schools also have a  
21 lack of funding for uniforms and lack space as well.  
22 This is mostly because so many schools have to share  
23 their gym. In my school's case, we have to share a  
24 whole building, not just a gym, with six different  
25 schools. If the Council Member and Department of

1  
2 Education want to make schools more equitable [sic],  
3 they can improve young women's sports teams by not  
4 only having just three sports teams young women can  
5 join, but by having other sports teams as well. For  
6 example, cheerleading. There is not that many cheer  
7 leading teams in the south Bronx public schools. You  
8 can also help by giving us funding for new uniforms  
9 or spaces to practice so that teams don't have to  
10 wait for other schools in the building to get out or  
11 finish using the gym. I hope my research and  
12 opinions shared today have influenced your decisions  
13 on whether or not you will change New York City's  
14 sports-- New York City south Bronx public schools for  
15 the better of all the students, their education and  
16 the student's involvement in school. Thank you again  
17 for this opportunity.

18 FRANCISCO CORNEJO: Good afternoon,  
19 Council Members, and thanks for inviting me speak.  
20 My name is Francisco Cornejo [sp?]. I'm in the 10<sup>th</sup>  
21 grade at the Bronx Academy of Letters, and I am a  
22 student intern with Integrate NYC for Me. The  
23 possibilities, I believe, for New York City schools  
24 is for students that have total equality across race,  
25 class and gender. This is important to be because

1 every student should be entitled to the same access  
2 and great education. The topic I selected to  
3 research on inequality in New York City school is how  
4 certain schools have many options for classes which  
5 students can take and have are very few. Through my  
6 research I found that public schools like mine in the  
7 south Bronx, students don't have access to classes  
8 that they want to take. I would like to take, for  
9 example, music, theater and writing. Instead, almost  
10 my whole day is filled with Regent where requirements  
11 in Regents prep. Every day I feel useless because I  
12 don't get to explore what I want to explore. If the  
13 Council and the Department of Education want to make  
14 school even more equitable, they can create--sorry.  
15 They can improve by giving students all options for  
16 classes they're interested in. In terms of proposal  
17 511A, I think it's important for schools to report  
18 their improvement so is increasing diversity and  
19 equality because students don't get to explore  
20 classes they can't figure out what they want to be in  
21 the world. I think it's important for New York City  
22 Department of Education to make diversity and  
23 equality a priority, because people who don't get  
24 this opportunity feel tired in school. It actually  
25



1  
2 gets in the way of them wanting to do anything. I  
3 think it's important for the New York State to change  
4 how students are accepted into specialized schools  
5 with a lot of resources and support because all  
6 students should be able to feel [sic] attracted [sic]  
7 to school. I hope my research and opinion today have  
8 change the way all you are thinking about giving  
9 students the opportunity to have more selections and  
10 choices in their education. Thank you for this  
11 opportunity.

12 AYANA BAHINE: Good afternoon and thank  
13 you for this opportunity, and thank you for choosing  
14 to sit me in a panel with these great children and  
15 students. My name is Ayana Bahine [sp?] and among  
16 other things I'm a parent of two children at Arts and  
17 Letters K to Eight Public School in Fort Green  
18 Brooklyn, and I'm here to ask the City Council to  
19 work with Arts and Letters and other schools in New  
20 York City school system to increase diversity in our  
21 public schools. First, by giving Arts and Letters  
22 permission to set aside seats for 40 percent low  
23 income students in the incoming kindergarten classes  
24 after sibling and inclusion preferences are taken  
25 into account. And second, that you allow the sibling

1  
2 preference to extend to the current Arts and Letters  
3 Middle School students. Today, Arts and Letters is  
4 one of the most diverse schools in the city, and we  
5 appreciate this diversity and what it gives to our  
6 children daily in understanding of themselves and the  
7 world as well as in their accumulation of skills as  
8 classroom learners. We don't want to lose this  
9 diversity that we value so highly, and we have to  
10 take steps today to make sure that it's diverse  
11 tomorrow. The rapidly changing demographics of our  
12 neighborhood require us to make a conscious effort to  
13 keep our school diverse. Arts and Letters is in  
14 District 13 and we've seen the success of PS 133 and  
15 our CEC in using this set aside to deal with issues  
16 of segregation in our schools. We too want that 40  
17 percent conscious choice of the K to eight school.  
18 We need to make sure that the sibling preference  
19 applies to the entire K to eight population. You  
20 already know how important diversity is in a school  
21 and in the classroom to boosting achievement for all  
22 students, exposure to other races, socioeconomic  
23 levels, skill levels, physical abilities. This is  
24 the one thing that has always given this city an edge  
25 in the world of ideas and problem solving. Arts and

1  
2 Letters has 493 students or close to 300 families. We  
3 sent a petition to our families yesterday, and we now  
4 have 132 signatures, and petition reads in part,  
5 "Thank you for undertaking a hearing on resolution  
6 proposed to address the critical issue of diversity  
7 in our city schools. We, the undersigned parents of  
8 Arts and Letters community, are extremely eager to  
9 see increases in the movement at the New York City  
10 Department of Education to ensure that all New York  
11 City schools reflect the diversity of the city in  
12 their enrollment and that they be supported--that we  
13 be supported in our efforts to reserve space for  
14 black and Latino students, students eligible for free  
15 lunch and reduced price lunch." We're eager as a  
16 community, as a school community to educate and  
17 engage our families in understanding how such  
18 policies can benefit the learning of all students  
19 enrolled in our school, and with your permission,  
20 we'd like to submit our petition along with a paper  
21 by the Century Foundation called Boosting Achievement  
22 by Pursuing Diversity. Thank you, again for this  
23 opportunity to talk and I'm sure you will have no  
24 questions for me and focus more on these great  
25 students. Thanks.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, thank you. And  
3 it's not that we don't have any questions for you. I  
4 appreciate your time coming in and stuff. We have  
5 like 10 more panels, and that's really the issue for  
6 me for time, but I do want to compliment the students  
7 for coming in. Where--what school--where is your  
8 school located?

9 TIMOTHY MARTINEZ: 339 Morris Avenue.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: In the Bronx. Okay,  
11 well I hope that this has been an educational  
12 experience for you and that you've gotten to see how  
13 the Council works and the connection between politics  
14 and education, which is something that took me until  
15 I was an adult to really fully realize decisions are  
16 made here. Funding decisions are made here. Policy  
17 decisions are made here, and I appreciate you coming  
18 down and sharing your experiences, because ultimately  
19 it's about the students. It's about you and your  
20 lives that we're all sitting here now trying to  
21 discuss this issue of diversity and hearing firsthand  
22 how diversity and issues of diversity impact you in  
23 the schools is really very important to me. And I  
24 want to say thank you all for coming in. Thank you.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Mr. Chairman, I'd  
3 just like the record to reflect this is my favorite  
4 panel of the day so far, with respect to all the  
5 other excellent panels, really, but not just because  
6 you came down, not just because you care about the  
7 issue, but to have done the research, to have looked  
8 at what it means, to be doing it together, and to  
9 think about how to make change. So, thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Okay,  
11 Michael Mascetti, Science Schools Initiative, Carlos  
12 Guzman, Science Schools Initiative, Valerie Boss,  
13 Science Schools Initiative, Tendaye Watkins [sp?],  
14 also Science Schools Initiative. Okay, would you  
15 raise your right hand so I can swear you in, please?  
16 Do you solemnly swear or affirm to tell the truth,  
17 the whole truth and nothing but the truth, and to  
18 answer Council Member questions honestly?

19 [off mic]

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Who would  
21 like to begin?

22 MICHAEL MASCETTI: I'll begin.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay.

24 MICHAEL MASCETTI: Good afternoon Council  
25 Members and staff. My name is Michael Mascetti, and

1  
2 I am an Elder Law Attorney and Executive Director of  
3 a 501C3 not for profit organization called the  
4 Science Schools Initiative. I was born and raised in  
5 Queens. I am a graduate of Stuyvesant High School,  
6 class of 2002, Fordham University and the CUNY School  
7 of Law. I have come here today to speak about my  
8 passion, teaching algebra to 12 year olds on Saturday  
9 and Sunday mornings. In 2006 and 2007 I founded the  
10 Science Schools Initiative with a fellow Stuyvesant  
11 High School alumnus. Having privately tutored for  
12 the specialized high school admissions test for many  
13 years prior, we set out to start a program targeted  
14 at families who could not afford high quality  
15 preparation for the SHSAT, but who had children with  
16 the potential to do well on this exam with eight to  
17 ten months of tutoring. All of our tutors are  
18 graduates of the specialized high schools and have  
19 had years of experience preparing students for  
20 difficult exams. All of our tutors have had the  
21 unique experience of preparing for this exam at 12  
22 and 13 years old and know how to inspire kids to  
23 attend their Alma Maters. Former Council Member  
24 Robert Jackson, Mr. Dromm's predecessor as Chair of  
25 the Education Committee had a daughter who attended

1 the Bronx High School of Science. When we met with  
2 Council Member Jackson in 2007, he immediately shared  
3 our view that there is many intellectually gifted  
4 students on 177<sup>th</sup> Street as there are on East 86<sup>th</sup>  
5 Street. Council Member Jackson helped us obtain space  
6 from Columbia University Medical Center where we have  
7 held classes for the last seven years. He also  
8 helped us print us our books and gave us substantial  
9 discretionary funding every year that he served on  
10 the council since 2007. We have since received  
11 funding from Council Members Ydanis Rodriguez, Mark  
12 Levine and Melissa Mark-Viverito. These funds have  
13 been the lifeblood of our small but determined  
14 tutoring organization. This past October we finished  
15 two programs with 40 students at our Washington  
16 Heights location and 30 students in Brooklyn where we  
17 tutor students at the Brooklyn Tech Alumni Foundation  
18 STEM pipeline program. Because we draw students from  
19 neighborhoods that are composed of predominantly  
20 African-American and Latino families, the  
21 overwhelming majority of our students are African-  
22 American or Latino. Every year, at least 41 percent  
23 of our students have been admitted to the specialized  
24 high schools. Although we are a small program, every  
25

1  
2 year African-American and Latino students who  
3 participated in the Science Schools Initiative  
4 Program have entered Stuyvesant High School, the  
5 Bronx High School of Science, Brooklyn Tech, the High  
6 School for American Studies, and the High School for  
7 Math, Science and Engineering. In addition, we have  
8 learned that our families need extensive support to  
9 guide them through these screened public high  
10 school's admissions process. So we now spend almost  
11 entire year educating our families on this  
12 complicated high school admissions system. Our focus  
13 is on getting kids into and more importantly  
14 preparing kids for top public high schools where we  
15 know they will succeed and eventually move on to top  
16 colleges. While we educate students and their  
17 families on high school admissions and teach students  
18 reading comprehension, logic, time management, and  
19 study skills, the majority of our program focuses on  
20 developing our student's understanding of mathematics  
21 so that they are prepared for the rigorous  
22 mathematical problem solving skills demanded by the  
23 SHSAT and by the specialized high schools themselves,  
24 which are most all specialized STEM schools. Over our  
25 eight to 10 month program, we provide advanced



1 enrichment for students who want to soar, and we  
2 identify and support students who need extra one on  
3 one and small group tutoring support or even testing  
4 accommodations. Our program is very long compared to  
5 most private test prep centers because we need the  
6 time to look at what kids have learned and address  
7 their fundamental deficiencies in essential academic  
8 knowledge. One year we were invited into a school  
9 which was forced into a turnaround model because of  
10 low student performance on the state math and ELA  
11 exams. We spent Saturdays providing enrichment to  
12 the honors class at this school in Norwood in the  
13 Bronx. What I saw at this school was shocking. These  
14 students had 90 plus averages and were bright  
15 students, yet they struggled to do simple arithmetic  
16 problems like adding two-sevenths and four-ninths.  
17 These students were not being challenged in a way  
18 that matched their innate level of high ability.  
19 Even more troubling, the students and their parents  
20 did not know how far behind they were from middle  
21 school students in other parts of the city. Math is  
22 a particularly sequential subject. If you do not  
23 master a concept in the fourth grade and no one  
24 addresses that knowledge deficiency, that deficiency  
25

1 will haunt you as you struggle in the ninth grade and  
2 throughout high school. I believe that math is a  
3 subject where many kids begin to fall behind, feel  
4 stupid and lose confidence in their talents and  
5 abilities. Middle school math is particularly  
6 critical. This is when students learn about algebra,  
7 and it is when many kids begin to approach a point  
8 where their cumulative knowledge deficiencies become  
9 too great for most of them to overcome. Diversity is  
10 a very important goal, but it is also important that  
11 we do not set up students for failure. The reality  
12 is that there are many middle schools throughout the  
13 city that have no students who are prepared to do the  
14 type of school work demanded by the specialized high  
15 school. In 2004, only 2.1 percent of African-  
16 American public schools eighth graders and 2.8  
17 percent of Latino eighth graders were high performing  
18 scorers on the state math exam. That's from the  
19 Department of Education website, by the way. This is  
20 appalling, and it receives virtually no attention.  
21 We need to support all students who have high  
22 academic potential. Instead, we focus most all of  
23 our attention on preventing drop-outs and focusing on  
24 not leaving any child behind, leaving families to  
25

1  
2 fend for themselves if they have an intellectually  
3 gifted but unchallenged child. The city government  
4 should make a decision that additional academic  
5 support for academically gifted students is  
6 important. I implore you to focus greater resources  
7 on supporting extracurricular academic programs in  
8 underserved communities. I have learned over the last  
9 seven years running the Science Schools Initiative  
10 that there are hundreds of students and parents in  
11 upper Manhattan alone who are thirsty for a rigorous  
12 extracurricular academic program, but such programs  
13 are few and far between. Kids want to be supported  
14 but also challenged. Preparing for that specialized  
15 high school admissions test is a way for students to  
16 strive to improve their academic abilities. I ask  
17 each of you to stand up and support additional  
18 educational opportunities and to vote no on  
19 Resolution 442, which is a false solution to a  
20 significant educational problem. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next,  
22 please.

23 VALERIE BOSS: Hello. My name is Valerie  
24 Boss, and I am a parent of two children that have  
25 gone through the specialized high schools. The

1  
2 program that he was just describing, the Science  
3 Initiative, my eldest daughter went in the first year  
4 they had just started. It was a year program. She  
5 came from Mott Hall [sic] School for Gifted Children,  
6 so she was smart, but she needed prep in terms of  
7 taking the exam. It lasted a year. She went every  
8 Saturday. It was a lot to get a 12 year old to go  
9 every Saturday to the course, but she did it. She  
10 finished the course. She took the test. She was  
11 admitted to Stuyvesant High School. She had a  
12 fantastic STEM education. She is now a sophomore at  
13 Harvard College majoring in Computer Science. My  
14 youngest daughter went through the program again  
15 three years later. Again, she begrudged having to go  
16 every Saturday, but she too needed prep in terms of  
17 taking the exam. It was very conducive. In fact, it  
18 helped her with her school work because they were  
19 going over math problems and English problems at a  
20 slower rate. She could have a better understanding.  
21 She is now a junior at Brooklyn Tech, also interested  
22 in going into technology. So, I firmly believe in  
23 these programs. I firmly believe in these schools.  
24 There are not many women in technology, and Latino

1  
2 women even less, and my daughters will be two of the  
3 ones to go forward. Thank you.

4 CARLOS GUZMAN: My name is Carlos Guzman.  
5 I have two sons. They went to Brooklyn Tech. My  
6 first son went on 1980's. Here after [inaudible  
7 06:36:17] from Columbia. My second son is at present  
8 time is in 12<sup>th</sup> grade in Brooklyn Tech. As a Latino  
9 I never feel a victim of the system. I always try to  
10 teach my sons to be winners. So, I think that you  
11 trying to help us, the Latinos, to improve in the  
12 education system, but I think we need to ask the  
13 parents, every parents, to participate in the  
14 education of the kid's. Today I found an article  
15 from November 4, where the wife of the Mayor saying  
16 here that Bill de Blasio, the decision [sic] for him  
17 to get a classroom solving problems is what's to be a  
18 partners [sic] of the education of the vision [sic].  
19 So what I'm trying to say there is that because of  
20 the parent has to be a partner in the education of  
21 the kids, not only the systems try to put--making  
22 them as the victims of their situation or the result  
23 of the exams. So my present time is that I am  
24 opposed to what you are trying to do to this test  
25 because we are Latino or because we are African-

1  
2 American. I don't believe that you feeling sorry for  
3 myself because I'm Latino is make me better education  
4 for my sons. Thank you.

5 TENDAYE WATKINS: Good afternoon to the  
6 Council Members. Chairman, I applaud your stamina for  
7 today, it's been an incredibly long one. My name is  
8 Tendaye Watkins [sp?], and I'm a parent and an  
9 education advocate. I have come here to ask each of  
10 you and even your Council Members that are not  
11 present today to vote no to Resolution 442. I bring  
12 the story of a young man named Teresi [sp?] whose an  
13 eighth grader at Excellence Boys Charter School in  
14 Bedford Stuyvesant, Brooklyn. He spend the last nine  
15 months from March 2<sup>nd</sup> to October 19<sup>th</sup> of this year  
16 traveling alone, round trip two and a half hours for  
17 a three hour class. He sacrificed 30 Sundays and  
18 spent 90 class hours, not counting study time,  
19 preparing for the SHSAT. He did this with no summer  
20 break and concurrently maintained his regular school  
21 workload, earning strong marks and going to school  
22 essentially six days a week. This scholar is  
23 motivated. He's high achieving. He's quick witted  
24 and he has a very strong work ethic. He's also 12  
25 years old. He scored fours on his math and English

1 state exams two years in a row. I'm talking six and  
2 seventh grade. And he lives in District 16, which  
3 has no gifted and talented programming, has no  
4 rigorously academic challenging academic enrichment  
5 programming, and as far as I know, no magnet  
6 programming that prepares students for college  
7 preparatory work. What he did have was a persistent  
8 mother, one who scoured the internet to find  
9 affordable test preparation, but there was none. But  
10 what I did find was a one page or two page website  
11 for the Science Schools Initiative Program. This  
12 program serves Title One students in upper Manhattan.  
13 Remember, now, I lived in Brooklyn. And it relies on  
14 donations and has no permanent site, so it's  
15 switching between Columbia University Medical Center  
16 all the way on 168<sup>th</sup> Street and between a public  
17 schools on 135<sup>th</sup> Street. This program is run by Mr.  
18 Mascetti and a small group of dedicated specialized  
19 high school alumni and current students who believe  
20 in equal access for well qualified and deserving  
21 students from low income backgrounds. My son,  
22 Teresi, was blessed to be one of the 40 kids to  
23 successfully complete this program and sit for the  
24 SHSAT this past October. And he sat for it with  
25

1  
2 confidence, ready and prepared to meet the challenge  
3 that is the three hour exam for one shot at a free  
4 selective education. This program, the Science  
5 Schools Initiative, was critical and met my son at  
6 his current academic abilities and elevated his  
7 skills, strengthening his capacity to be strategic  
8 and focused during a high stakes exam. The demand  
9 for programming like this in Bedford Stuyvesant,  
10 Brooklyn is incredibly high in District 16, but there  
11 is no one to meet the need. I implore the City  
12 Council Members present here today to understand that  
13 a commitment to diversity is appropriate, but  
14 enacting legislation that funds proven, scalable and  
15 sustainable programs like the Science Schools  
16 Initiative will have a longer lasting and far greater  
17 impact on students and the families that you each  
18 serve. Changing the criteria for admissions to mimic  
19 selective boarding or private day schools where other  
20 factors beyond test performance are taken into  
21 account, in my estimation as a parent of 25 years, is  
22 a grave mistake with far reaching consequences, and I  
23 appeal to each one of you to recognize and change  
24 what is unequal in our educational system, which is  
25 equal access. Black and Hispanic children when



1 provided with the same level of quality resources of  
2 teachers, curriculum, materials, and funding,  
3 technology can become well qualified students and  
4 will not just show incremental gains in performance  
5 for significant and sustained performance, but again,  
6 it requires equal access and consistent supports. We  
7 all know that New York City Department of Education  
8 operates the largest school system in the country  
9 with a 20.6 billion operating budget, and we're in  
10 the Empire State where citizens in the five boroughs  
11 pay disproportionately higher taxes than other  
12 municipalities in our state, and our children all  
13 across New York City do not receive equal school  
14 funding so that truly no child is left behind. I know  
15 y'all know this. I know y'all agree. I'm not telling  
16 you anything new, right? But currently as it stands,  
17 the majority of black and Hispanic children are at a  
18 marked academic disadvantage to their Asian, Indian  
19 and white peers. It will become increasingly hard  
20 for these students to be academically competitive  
21 unless all Council Members do something today, work  
22 together, develop a comprehensive and a cohesive plan  
23 that utilizes existing infrastructures and resources  
24 and implements it in a phased approach to equal  
25

1  
2 access. That doesn't require a study. Take  
3 actionable and quantifiable plan to Governor Cuomo,  
4 and please remember that today's high school  
5 experience is unlike anything else that anyone in  
6 this building has ever experienced. It's longer, it's  
7 harder. It requires more. I firmly believe that  
8 education is the best long term economic investment  
9 that anyone can make and that a high quality  
10 education is the foundation for every child to grow,  
11 prosper and contribute to a positive society. I  
12 think that a five point plan, which I've outlined  
13 here, I won't go into it in the interest of time, is  
14 appropriate. And I thank the City Council, Chairman  
15 and members for their time and willingness to hear  
16 the voice of the people today. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, thank you very  
18 much to the panel, and also Mr. Mascetti, did I say  
19 that--

20 MICHAEL MASCETTI: It's Mascetti.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Mascetti.

22 MICHAEL MASCETTI: Yes, silent C.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, silent. Thank  
24 you for your testimony also. I could relate to it,  
25 although I don't agree with your conclusions,

1  
2 obviously, if you heard my statements prior, but you  
3 do bring up one thing, "Math is particular sequential  
4 subject. If you do not master a concept in the fourth  
5 grade and no one addresses that knowledge deficiency,  
6 that deficiency will haunt you, struggle--it will  
7 haunt you as you struggle in the ninth grade and  
8 throughout high school." And then you said a little  
9 bit further down in your testimony, "It's also  
10 important that we do not set students up for  
11 failure." Now, I have to tell you, I was teaching  
12 when the Bloomberg Administration was in office, and  
13 the math program that they were using, Everyday Math,  
14 did not allow you to go back to do review, and so if  
15 a child did not get a concept, you had to continue to  
16 move on, and that was the end of that, and that's  
17 also a big reason why students don't have the--if you  
18 lose it in fourth grade, you're not going to be able  
19 to do it in ninth grade, and I just want to thank you  
20 for pointing that out, and I believe that is part of  
21 the set up for failure as well.

22 MICHAEL MASCETTI: Councilman, I thought  
23 about being a math teacher instead of a lawyer at  
24 various times throughout my life, and I think that  
25 would be one of the biggest frustrations that I would

1  
2 have to deal with, seeing kids who have missed  
3 something in the earlier grades and not being able to  
4 go back and address those deficiencies because, you  
5 know, they're tied to a curriculum that's planned  
6 down to the day what they need to teach. So, I agree  
7 with you on that point.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And that's exactly  
9 the way it was under the former administration, which  
10 is why teachers need to be allowed to have some  
11 professional discretion in terms of how they address  
12 teaching of materials in the classroom. So, I want  
13 to thank you for coming in, and we need to move onto  
14 the next panel. Thank you everybody for all your  
15 comments. Michael Hilton from Poverty and Race  
16 Research Action Council, Kamala Carmen [sp?], New  
17 York City Public, Jimmy Wah [sic] Lee from Brooklyn  
18 Asian Community Empowerment, Steve Chung from United  
19 Chinese Association of Brooklyn Embrace, and Glyn  
20 Caddell from Staten Island Technical High School  
21 Alumni Association. Okay, if you'd raise your right  
22 hand I'd like to swear you in. Do you solemnly swear  
23 or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and  
24 nothing but the truth, and to answer Council Member  
25 questions honestly?

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

UNIDENTIFIED: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, who will start?

Let's let our ladies start.

KAMALA CARMEN: Hi, my name is Kamala Carmen, and I'm a parent of two public school children, and I'm also the Deputy Director of NYC Public, which is a parent advocacy group. In preparing to write this testimony, I decided to look up the demographics of my zoned elementary school, which also happens to be in Council Member Landers. In advertently I clicked on an elementary school with the identical PS number, but in a different borough. By totally random match up yielded a picture of such stark differences. One school had a population that was 72 percent white, while white students made up just one percent of the other school. Nine percent of the children at one school qualified for free lunch as opposed to nearly all students, 98 percent at the other. I grew up on the south and started public schools in the 60's. My elementary school back then started out as racially isolated as the schools in this example, but by the time I graduated, court ordered busing had begun. As a result, the schools I attended in the deep south for most of my

1 pre-college life were more integrated than schools  
2 most New York City kids attend in 2014. This is  
3 scandalous for any number of reasons. For starters,  
4 and as I'm sure it has been mentioned here before,  
5 research shows that student academic performance for  
6 all students rises in integrated settings. But  
7 striving for diverse schools goes beyond academics.  
8 The racial tensions that we're seeing in our judicial  
9 process and in our streets will certainly not be  
10 eased if we cannot even bring the youngest of us  
11 together. So while I am glad that the de  
12 Blasio/Farina DOE has decided that it's better to  
13 support so-called failing schools than to close them,  
14 partially because closing schools has often caused  
15 harm not only to those schools, but to other schools  
16 who are overwhelmed by the influx of needy students  
17 the shutter schools pass along to them, I do think  
18 the community schools model is enough if it means  
19 that those schools remain racially and  
20 socioeconomically isolated. There must be a  
21 concerted effort to think about how to make schools  
22 more diverse, even if this means shaking up the  
23 status quo and moving away from a zoned only view of  
24 how to assign students to elementary schools. At  
25

1 this juncture, you'd be correct to say, however, that  
2 moving away from zones at the middle and high school  
3 level, a practice instituted in New York City during  
4 the Bloomberg years, has not resulted in more diverse  
5 schools. I would argue that it's because the  
6 Bloomberg Anti-zoning [sic] was set up as a blind  
7 choice model, and that model in which parents are  
8 charged with negotiating a bewildering complex  
9 admissions process favors those families like my own  
10 with the time to tour multiple schools and the savvy  
11 to figure out the optimal way to rank their choices.  
12 In practice, this is meant that those in the know who  
13 tend to be better off financially have concentrated  
14 their sites in a narrow band of schools. These  
15 schools then become pockets of the middle class,  
16 which is often correlated to race, while other  
17 schools remain places of concentrated poverty, which  
18 also frequently correlates to race. It is a vicious  
19 cycle as those schools with the neediest students  
20 find themselves over taxed and that's less appealing  
21 to the better off, and those with the least needy  
22 populations become even more attractive because they  
23 are able to build up their schools through  
24 fundraising volunteer time, etcetera. This  
25

1 stratification also sadly true of existing unzoned  
2 elementary schools. Before the Bloomberg years,  
3 Community Education Council One, as Lisa Donlan spoke  
4 about earlier, which is unzoned had fewer racially  
5 isolated schools. Blind choice changed that. My  
6 child's schools, PS 146 The Brooklyn New School, an  
7 unzoned school that draws from several Brooklyn  
8 districts had a more diverse student body before the  
9 city's introduction of the blind choice pre-k lottery  
10 in 2008. More recently, the blind choice  
11 kindergarten connect process, which was rammed  
12 through in the last month of Bloomberg's tenure  
13 without so much as a public hearing and implemented  
14 for the first time under Carmen Farina's watch  
15 appears to have eroded diversity at BNS even further.  
16 Kindergarten Connect, a massive student assignment  
17 vehicle which falsely promises city parents 900  
18 choices for kindergarten was not designed with an eye  
19 towards mitigating the city's growing segregation.  
20 There are ways to remedy this. I'm not going to go  
21 through them all because other people have talked  
22 about them, but they range from keeping the blind  
23 choice, but then helping people with the choice  
24 process through maybe providing navigators like Obama  
25



1  
2 Care provides for healthcare to controlled choice  
3 like Michael Alves talked about to individual school  
4 plans. Like, BNS has one. Now my daughter's school.  
5 Middle and high schools could also improve diversity  
6 by become EDOP [sic] schools, EDOP schools which were  
7 once more abundant in the city than they are now have  
8 admissions formulas that reserve some spots for  
9 academically [sic] high, low and on-target achievers.  
10 In closing, I would like to come back to my own  
11 education. I said that the schools I attended were  
12 more diverse than New York City schools, but it would  
13 be false to infer from that that I sat in classrooms  
14 that were integrated. Tracking was so intense that  
15 it would all been ensured that kids remained  
16 segregated by race and class and their "honors or  
17 remedial classes." Rather than expanding gifted and  
18 talented programs or other screened admissions  
19 schools, New York City DOE should be encouraging  
20 school leaders to adopt curricula and methodologies  
21 that allow all children to succeed. This means that  
22 schools may have to give some extra thought about how  
23 to work with students who are coming in with  
24 different strengths, meeting them where they are,  
25 cultivating those strengths and addressing their

1  
2 deficits. The schools at the New York Performance  
3 Standards Consortium provide a good model in this  
4 regard. They have an excellent track record of  
5 educating a diverse student body via inquiry and  
6 project based learning and using rigorous but non-  
7 standardized forms of student assessment. It's  
8 schools like these not the no excuses charter chains  
9 whose rigid disciplinary codes and test focused  
10 classes require massive advertising campaigns to draw  
11 the middle class that we should be looking to raise  
12 the votes [sic] in which all our children fail.

13           GLYN CADDELL: Thank you. Thank you for  
14 letting me speak today and for taking the time to  
15 listen. My name is Glyn Caddell, and I'm  
16 representing the Staten Island Technical High School  
17 Alumni Association. As a graduate of Staten Island  
18 Tech and active Alumni Association member I can offer  
19 some valuable insight into the effects of using  
20 multiple criteria as opposed to an objective entrance  
21 exam, the SHSAT. Staten Island didn't always use  
22 SHSAT for admission into the school. Prior to 2005,  
23 admission was based on multiple criteria. Using  
24 multiple criteria, the 2002 freshman population was  
25 82 percent white. Today, using SHSAT the freshman

1  
2 class is only 57 percent white. Also, according to  
3 the education website Chalkbeat.org, Tech had 13  
4 students who had individualized education plans or  
5 required special services out of the total of 1,100  
6 students. When multiple criteria was used, that  
7 number was zero. The use of the SHSAT actually  
8 resulted in a dramatic increase in diversity. I'm  
9 also proud to say that as a result of the use of  
10 SHSAT and the hard work of the teachers and students,  
11 Staten Island Tech was recently ranked number six and  
12 number five in the country by Newsweek and Needs  
13 [sic] respectively. The current students prove on a  
14 daily basis that they deserve to be at Staten Island  
15 Tech. The students voluntarily fill their schedules  
16 with AP classes, theater projects, sports, after  
17 school clubs, and even internships. The use of the  
18 objective SHSAT has contributed to an increase in  
19 academic achievement by the school. The admissions  
20 process works. We should not compromise recent  
21 successes of the school by altering the admissions  
22 process. Increased representation of black and  
23 Hispanic in Tech is something I would like to see  
24 done, but we shouldn't rig the admission process in  
25 way to get that result. The right way to do it

1 involves a little bit of effort. We should improve  
2 education in failing elementary and intermediate  
3 schools that are predominantly black and Hispanic.  
4 We should raise awareness of the test and the  
5 specialized high schools years before the students  
6 have to take the test. We can make the test  
7 mandatory and offer it on a school day rather than  
8 over the weekend, and we could expand the DREAM SHSI  
9 program, which offers free SHSAT preparation for  
10 qualifying students. Let's not make changes that  
11 would damage the integrity of Staten Island Tech and  
12 the other specialized high schools. I would like to  
13 end with an excerpt written by another Staten Island  
14 Tech Graduate, Maggie Fox. She's a proud Hispanic  
15 graduate and asked me to present this to you. Here  
16 are her words. "The Mayor's opinion that the process  
17 needs to be made easier for the underrepresented  
18 population is insulting. The Mayor's implying that  
19 blacks and Hispanics need extra help to get into  
20 these schools and the lack of test prep creates an  
21 uneven playing field. The idea of making a process  
22 like this one easier for a student because of race  
23 undermines the accomplishments of students of these  
24 underrepresented races that are accepted. This plan  
25

1  
2 has the appearance of a handout and ignores the  
3 actual problem. The key to understanding why out of  
4 all the students who took the SHSAT last year and  
5 were admitted into specialized high schools, only  
6 seven percent were black and five percent--seven  
7 percent Hispanic and five percent black is not  
8 analyzing admission process or the test. The key is  
9 seeing why these students are not making it at these  
10 schools requires going back to the educational  
11 beginnings. Students need to have a strong  
12 educational foundation for success. It's clear that  
13 many students in low income and highly minority  
14 populated areas are not getting a fair education."  
15 Okay, and I'll just cut it short for purpose of time,  
16 but thank you.

17 MICHAEL HILTON: My name is Michael  
18 Hilton, and I'm a Policy Analyst at the Poverty and  
19 Race Research Action Council, and I'm here today to  
20 speak on behalf of the National Coalition on School  
21 Diversity. The National Coalition on School  
22 Diversity is a network of national civil rights  
23 organizations, university based research centers and  
24 state and local coalition working to expand support  
25 for government policies that promote school diversity

1  
2 and reduce racial isolation. We also support the  
3 work of state and local school diversity  
4 practitioners. Our work is informed by an advisory  
5 panel of scholars and academic researchers whose work  
6 relates to issues of equity, diversity and  
7 desegregation. I encourage you to check out our  
8 website at [www.school-diveristy.org](http://www.school-diveristy.org). It has a wealth  
9 of resources. The ongoing re-segregation of United  
10 States--of school in United States has resulted in  
11 increasingly unequal distribution of educational  
12 opportunities throughout the nation with the academic  
13 performance of low income and minority students  
14 suffering as a result. Taking steps to understand  
15 and increase racial and economic diversity in schools  
16 can be an effective method of countering this  
17 disturbing trend. A significant body of academic  
18 research indicates that low income and minority  
19 students exhibit better academic performance in  
20 diverse rather than in segregated school settings.  
21 Economically diverse schools may also have greater  
22 access to fundraising resources as well as greater  
23 distribution of political influence, which can  
24 potentially result in a more equitable distribution  
25 of educational resources and greater gains for

1 students. Furthermore, the benefits of diversity in  
2 schools are not restricted to minority students.  
3 Research shows that a diversity educational setting  
4 can lead to improved critical thinking skills and  
5 better academic performance in non-minority students.  
6 Nationwide, racial and poverty concentration in  
7 schools has been on the rise with the average student  
8 experiencing a greater degree of racial isolation  
9 than was seen as far back as 1970. In particular,  
10 schools in New York State and New York City have been  
11 extremely segregated. The high rates of segregation  
12 in New York City schools are particularly disturbing  
13 since New York is such a diverse city. Fortunately,  
14 New York City can use this enormous diversity to  
15 better serve its students, and the National Coalition  
16 believes that the three items being discussed today  
17 are a good first step in doing so. Thank you for  
18 your time.

19  
20 JIMMY LI: Good afternoon. My name Jamie  
21 Lee. I'm the Executive Director of Berber [sic]  
22 United Association, a member organizations of  
23 Brooklyn Asian Community Empowerment, BRACE. BRACE is  
24 an umbrella organization that consists of 30  
25 nonprofits, [inaudible 06:59:10] Association,

1 business, and community leaders. We believe that  
2 keeping SHSAT as the sole admission criteria is  
3 necessary. Just like SAT, SHSAT is an objective and  
4 fair process for eighth graders to enter specialized  
5 high schools. Many of this accepted high school  
6 students come from south Brooklyn area. Changing the  
7 fair admissions process will have a strong impact on  
8 our community. According to Department of Education  
9 data, majority of kids attending specialized high  
10 schools are from working class families. They  
11 certainly are not privileged. They study hard and  
12 their parents work hard to save every penny to  
13 support them academically. Eliminating a fair and  
14 objective admissions process is unfair to these  
15 students and their families, because it takes away  
16 the only opportunity that these gifted and talented  
17 students can receive an excellent education since  
18 these families cannot afford private school  
19 education. And we know that from all the panel's  
20 testimony today our New York City school educational  
21 system has a big problem. Many of our kids are not  
22 ready for high school and college. So, we hope that  
23 elected officials can improve our educational system  
24  
25



1  
2 so every student is special for our kids. So, thank  
3 you.

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

6 STEVE CHUNG: Hi, good morning. Oh,  
7 actually, it should be good evening now. My name is  
8 Steven Chung. I represent United Chinese Association  
9 of Brooklyn, a association consisting about 2,000  
10 members and also speaking for BRACE, which is  
11 umbrella organization with more than 30 community  
12 based organizations. I'm here to oppose the  
13 Resolution 442, which is to change the current SHSAT  
14 test system. I agree that our current specialized  
15 high school are severely underrepresented with Latino  
16 and African-American student, yet the school are  
17 amazingly diverse with students coming from all over  
18 the world with different religions, speaking  
19 different language and drastic difference in economic  
20 background. I agree that the current test is not the  
21 best method. Never the less, it produce 14 Nobel  
22 Prize winners, most among our country. [inaudible  
23 07:02:07] the current test system results are totally  
24 transparent, no favoritism involved, and students  
25 selection are solely based on merit and performance.

1  
2 And the specialized high schools are not for rich  
3 students. And based on Board of Education data,  
4 since 2006, low income student in Brooklyn Tech shot  
5 up from 29 percent to more than 60 percent and  
6 Stuyvesant is from 18 percent to 29 percent. It is  
7 the poor student who value education as the best path  
8 to success and work hard to earn their privilege into  
9 these specialized high school. And then why Latino  
10 and African-American are underrepresented in the  
11 specialized high schools is because our junior high  
12 school system fails to educate them. In 2013, New  
13 York State exam English, English exam result show  
14 that less than four percent of Latino and African-  
15 American eighth grader are at level four, and the  
16 math exam is less than three percent, and the data  
17 clearly explain their low enrollment percentage, and  
18 the real solution is to increase the admission rate  
19 is to push up the academic proficiency. Let's forget  
20 about the competition among our student racial  
21 background in the admission test. We must face the  
22 fact that we are living in a world of globalization,  
23 and our students are not only competing locally but  
24 are competing student globally. Our high school  
25 performance had already fallen behind two countries

1  
2 like Singapore and Belgium, and we are losing many of  
3 our high tech job overseas. And New York City is the  
4 most important city in our country, and the education  
5 now our children are the foundation of our nation's  
6 future, and this is the time that our legislator and  
7 leader must take action to regain our world's  
8 leadership in education. We must reform our  
9 education policy, retrain our teacher and provide  
10 equal access education to our children and motivate  
11 them to work harder, and convince our parent that  
12 education is the road to success. We must expand the  
13 current test system by building more specialized high  
14 schools to accept more student. So, don't change it.  
15 Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I just want to--I  
17 want to say thank you to the panel. Thank you for  
18 coming in. We still have an awful lot of people to  
19 get to. So, thank you. Thank you very much. Our  
20 next panel is Jan DeVore--Jim DeVore, Elizabeth  
21 Eilaender [sp?], sorry if I'm not saying your name  
22 correctly, V.J. Argawalla [sp?], Melanie Farrah  
23 [sp?], Coalition Bronx Science Alumni, Pamela  
24 Skinner, Black and Browns of the Big Three Inc., and  
25 Richard Young. Okay, I'm going to bring up Doctor

1  
2 Ivan Conn [sp?]. Is he still here? Okay, and  
3 Stanley Umstein [sp?], Bronx High School of Science.

4 [off mic]

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Alright, while we're  
6 getting--no, because I have to swear everybody in at  
7 the same time. Is Samuel Rob here? Sammy? Gone,  
8 okay. Frank Robitazi [sp?]? Gone. Sue Schneider?  
9 Okay, great. And Deborah Carland [sp?]? She's gone.  
10 Leah Silverman? Alright, so we're going to hold onto  
11 that. Sue Schneider is here, right?

12 UNIDENTIFIED: Yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, alright. Hold  
14 onto that. Alright. And who are you representing,  
15 sir?

16 UNIDENTIFIED: Deborah Carland.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay.

18 [off mic]

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So the person who's  
20 representing Deborah Carland, I want to ask you to  
21 fill out a slip as well as a technicality. For your  
22 own--with your own name. And what's your name, sir?  
23 Alright, okay. George Lee, thank you. Alright, so  
24 let's start over here. Let me swear you in. If  
25 you'd all raise your right hand. Do you solemnly

1  
2 swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth  
3 and nothing but the truth, and to answer Council  
4 Member questions honestly? Okay, thank you. Yeah,  
5 you can begin.

6           JIM DEVORE: Okay, my name is Jim DeVore.  
7 I'm a past President of Community Education Council  
8 for District 15 and except for a reference from  
9 Councilman Lander, apparently the anonymous founder  
10 of the PS 133 plan, but be that as it may, that's not  
11 what I'm here to talk about today. Let me tell you a  
12 little bit about myself, who I am, my family is, and  
13 where we are. I am probably the oldest graduate of  
14 Stuyvesant testifying here today. I am also the  
15 proud parent of a daughter whose SHSAT scores would  
16 have given her entry into every single SHSAT school  
17 except for Stuyvesant. So, and furthermore, I  
18 believe in the efficacy and appropriateness of  
19 rigorous academic high schools that are selective.  
20 Having heard all that, let me tell you why I'm here--  
21 what I speak here today about. I am here in critical  
22 support of 442 and a full-throated of David  
23 Bloomfield's position, that is the abolition of the  
24 SHSAT. I, like David Bloomfield, am somewhat worried  
25 or skeptical about creating specific criteria on the

1  
2 law because in point of fact, what we have found is  
3 every time politicians have gotten involved in this  
4 process, they've botched it up. I'll just give you a  
5 simple example. One of the most--what I wanted to  
6 discuss today more importantly is New York knows how  
7 to create outstanding public schools high schools  
8 that are selective, that are academically rigorous  
9 and diverse. And for example, the school that my  
10 daughter attends, Bard [sic] High School Early  
11 College is approximately one-third black and  
12 Hispanic. By the way, in contrast to the prior  
13 panel's Staten Island Tech person who indicated what  
14 a successful diversity operation, I would dare say  
15 Staten Island Tech is probably the most racially  
16 segregated in the city of New York, at least relative  
17 of the black and Hispanic populations. It is under  
18 three percent there. That is simply just not  
19 acceptable. The main villain in this piece it seems  
20 to me is Stanley Kaplan [sp?], and I'm fairly serious  
21 about that. When the law is passed, when Hecht  
22 Calandra was passed, there was no industry creating  
23 specialized high school test taker population. There  
24 is now, and Kaplan improved, for example, with SAT  
25 scores that he raise them, not by--which are

1  
2 purportedly aptitude tests, that he could raise them  
3 considerably just as the mills in Flushing have  
4 proven that you can train children how to--or the  
5 Mills private tutors, you can train a child how to do  
6 well on the SHSAT. When that is true, it is not a  
7 measure of aptitude. It's a measure of something  
8 else. Hecht Calandra was not intended to have the  
9 smartest kids or the highest achieving kids, let me  
10 rephrase that, get into the specialized school. It  
11 was "the smartest kids," the ones that had the best  
12 aptitude. That is no--it can no longer fulfill that  
13 mission under an SHSAT exam. Where there is some  
14 degree of--where you can use an exam, for example,  
15 would be like ELA and math scores. As I said, one of  
16 the examples that I would give is Townsend Harris has  
17 a--Townsend Harris is basically the identical  
18 achievement population as Stuyvesant has a black and  
19 Hispanic population five times greater than  
20 Stuyvesant, five times greater. Schools like Bard  
21 are one-third black and Hispanic. Beacon is 39  
22 percent black and Hispanic. Schools like Scholars  
23 Academy in Rockaway are approximately 30, which are  
24 very high achieving schools. The Global School for--  
25 excuse me. The Baccalaureate School for Global

1 Education, which I believe is in your district, Mr.  
2 Chairman, also have very substantial populations of  
3 black and Hispanic students and they are high  
4 achieving schools by any definition. Given the  
5 failure that the SHSAT's demonstrated, that it cannot  
6 come up with a equitable means of selecting children  
7 based on their talents, it should be abolished. And  
8 furthermore, I would suggest that even as Bloomfield  
9 has argued that leaving it to the sound educational  
10 judgment of the administrations of those schools is  
11 far better than almost any other alternative. I look  
12 at the political background, the egregious  
13 segregation that takes place in District Two, which  
14 is a politically determined segregation system that  
15 is most outrageous has Baruch with a 85 percent black  
16 and Hispanic--excuse me, 85 percent white and Asian  
17 population and a 15 percent black and Hispanic  
18 population where three blocks down the street Village  
19 Academy, which is also a selective school is 90  
20 percent black and Hispanic. That's a function of the  
21 politics that said that those district were  
22 politically connected and could maintain their  
23 segregated status. Get out of it. Stay out of it.  
24 Just give--maintain high performing schools, and let  
25



1  
2 the local administrations determine how they can  
3 admit them. Thank you.

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

6 SUE SCHNEIDER: Okay. I'm Sue--

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Get that  
8 mic--

9 SUE SCHNEIDER: I'm Sue Schneider, former  
10 Advertising/Creative Director, Director of Remedial  
11 Reading School for Adults with Disabilities, and my  
12 daughter attended Stuyvesant. And you and will  
13 remain friends even though we're on opposite  
14 diametrically opposed sides. When Stuyvesant's  
15 former Principal Stan Tytell [sp?] asked me to create  
16 new recruitment handouts, one of his primarily goals  
17 was to attract black and Latino students. He knew I  
18 was passionate about wanting to expand diversity at  
19 Stuyvesant. He called me in. His Assistant  
20 Principal, Eleanor Archie, made sure that we  
21 connected with underrepresented minorities. We  
22 created literature that was specifically targeted to  
23 try to reach out to students of color, and working  
24 with Stuyvesant's alumni group we produced several  
25 pieces. While we were doing this, we were focusing

1 on minority recruitment, the press criticized the  
2 elitist SHSAT schools for low minority admissions.  
3 The NAACP sued. The DOE cut test prep. Only  
4 selected students could participate in the DREAM  
5 program via lottery. The Discovery Program's  
6 parameters were changes. Five additional schools  
7 recently added to the three Hecht Calandra schools  
8 complicated choice should a student risk choosing  
9 Stuyvesant as a his number one school or choose a  
10 safer less selective school. At the high school  
11 fairs we learned many middle school counselors  
12 weren't identifying or counseling bright students to  
13 apply to specialized schools. Often, students  
14 weren't even told about the SHSAT. Consider the  
15 proactive, well-informed approach to SHSAT prep and  
16 the application process that's prevalent in white and  
17 Asian dominant middle school. Is it equitable? No,  
18 but before you blame the SHSAT and change the policy  
19 consider that the vast majority of predominantly  
20 black and Latino lower and middle schools don't  
21 prepare students to qualify for or survive four  
22 excruciatingly challenging years at Bronx Science,  
23 Brooklyn Tech, Stuyvesant, or any of the SHSAT  
24 schools. These schools are not right for everyone,  
25

1 and when they're the wrong fit they can be painful.  
2  
3 I never could have survived Stuyvesant, but the SHSAT  
4 isn't the enemy it's portrayed as. For measuring  
5 whether eighth graders have skills needed to navigate  
6 these highly competitive schools, I believe the SHSAT  
7 is actually quite a successful tool. So why blame  
8 the test for the high school's racial imbalance  
9 rather than fixing the middle schools so they teach  
10 capable eighth graders geometry, algebra and critical  
11 thinking. I'm going to skip over some of this  
12 because we're all tired, but my fear is if we go in  
13 and we change the policy right now, we lower the  
14 difficulty of the test, we add additional criteria,  
15 the schools as we know them for decades and for  
16 generations will no longer exist, and that would be  
17 just a travesty. Please don't replace the SHSAT.  
18 Improve the middle schools so our children of color  
19 qualify for the education all of our children  
20 deserve, and don't cheat the children.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next,  
22 please.

23 ELIZABETH EILAENDER: I had good morning.  
24 I switched it to good afternoon, so now we're at good  
25 evening.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: It may be goodnight  
3 soon.

4 ELIZABETH EILAENDER: Chair Dromm and  
5 Council Member Lander, thank you for staying at this  
6 late hour. I have to say this is my first time here,  
7 and I'm a little disappointed. I didn't realize that  
8 the full committee or at least one other committee  
9 member besides the Chair would be here, but be that  
10 as it may, thank you. I am disappointed by that, but  
11 nevertheless, I'm here on behalf of my grandfather  
12 who graduated from Stuyvesant in 1938. My father  
13 graduated from Brooklyn Tech in 1960.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Oh, and can you just  
15 state your name?

16 ELIZABETH EILAENDER: Elizabeth Eilaender  
17 [sp?]. I apologize. And my daughter is a senior at  
18 Council Member Chin's Alma Mater, Bronx Science. I  
19 just went to some nondescript suburban high school in  
20 New Jersey. In any event, it was good enough. I  
21 ended up going to Dartmouth, but anyway. I'm here to  
22 talk about the proposed bill in the state  
23 legislature, which seeks to overturn the current  
24 SHSAT admission requirement. Notably there is scant  
25 input here from any current administrators or faculty

1 from the specialized high schools clamoring for  
2 change in the admissions process. In fact, they have  
3 been conspicuously silent. The proposed changes fail  
4 to address the root of the problem, which as we've  
5 heard repeatedly today, unfortunately is the  
6 systematic failure in K through eight, particularly  
7 in the middle schools. Change in the admissions  
8 process to include multiple measures in an attempt to  
9 correct the low numbers of black and Hispanic  
10 students is attacking the issue from the wrong end,  
11 and in doing so, it discriminates against Asian  
12 students and may in fact be illegal. What is going  
13 on in K through eight? Why is it that black and  
14 Hispanic children in many communities cannot perform  
15 well on the SHSAT? Those are the questions that are  
16 being asked by teachers and administrators that I  
17 have spoken to at the specialized high schools. They  
18 tell me that the enrichment programs to the extent  
19 they even exist, and I was actually quite surprised  
20 to hear from Council Member Rose that she has zero  
21 gifted programs in her entire district, which I also  
22 learned today is the entire island of Staten Island.  
23 How is that possible?  
24

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] In her  
3 council district, she was referring to.

4 ELIZABETH EILAENDER: But nevertheless,  
5 in her entire district there's zero gifted programs.  
6 But I've heard from guidance counselors at the  
7 specialized high school that in the programs that do  
8 exist, sometimes they will identify the gifted kids,  
9 and they end up teaching the other kids in the  
10 program, which is a shame for those kids who have  
11 been identified and a waste. And unfortunately, I've  
12 also been told, because I did a little bit of  
13 anecdotal research, that some of the kids are even  
14 bullied for being in these gifted programs, as it's  
15 "not cool to be smart." That has to change. More  
16 must be done for enrichment and test preparation.  
17 The effect of changing the admission requirements  
18 without first addressing failures in the elementary  
19 and middle schools will have a ripple effect that  
20 will not only stigmatize those students who would be  
21 accepted under the new system as it can always be  
22 questioned, why did they get in? How did they get  
23 in? Who did they know? Who did their parents know?  
24 Moreover, it may affect the college admissions  
25 process. Currently, a degree from Bronx Science or

1  
2 Stuyvesant or any of the specialized high schools has  
3 a prestige, a regard, a value. It's a badge of  
4 honor. Professionals, CEOs, Nobel Prize winners,  
5 they all have specialized high schools on their  
6 resume. As my daughter tells me, "It's a thing, mom."  
7 In addition, the proposed process is woefully  
8 vulnerable to manipulation, cronyism and fraud. Can  
9 you imagine, Chair Dromm, getting a call from a  
10 constituent saying, "Can you make a call? Who do you  
11 know? Can you help me out here?" With the SHSAT, we  
12 don't have that. What the current admissions policy  
13 does is exposes a systemic and injustice served to  
14 black and Latino students by our administration and  
15 it may be a violation of their own civil rights.  
16 Don't destroy something that exposes and injustice so  
17 as to keep it hidden. Instead, demand that this  
18 injustice itself be righted. Demand that the  
19 administration and the UFT provide an equal and  
20 equitable education and a superb one for all children  
21 regardless of race so all can excel in whatever path  
22 they take. If they finally provide black and Latino  
23 children with a high quality and inspiring education  
24 starting when they enter the system, the halls of our  
25 specialized high schools will soon reflect the makeup

1  
2 of our city, and everyone will be there because they  
3 deserved to be. The decision whether or not to  
4 dismantle the crown jewels of the New York City  
5 public school system is not even a close call.  
6 Please vote no on the Resolution and please do not  
7 support the current bills pending in the State  
8 Legislature.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next,  
10 please.

11 PAMELA SKINNER: Good evening Chairman  
12 Dromm, Councilman Lander and guests. My name is  
13 Pamela Skinner. I am the CEO and Founder of Blacks  
14 and Browns of the Big Three, a 501C3 nonprofit  
15 organization of more than 900 alumni from Brooklyn  
16 Tech, Stuyvesant and Bronx High School of Science who  
17 are dedicated to having more black and Latino  
18 students admitted to and graduate from our Alma  
19 Maters and the five new specialized high schools. I  
20 am also a member of the Brooklyn Tech Class of 1980.  
21 I am here today to offer my testimony on Resolution  
22 442k. I am concerned and appalled that in 2014, only  
23 seven black students made it into Stuyvesant High  
24 School out of 952 available seats. Some believe that  
25 the addition of multiple measures for the specialized



1 high school admission process will yield better  
2 results. Before we reinvent the wheel, I want to  
3 share some data to offer some perspective on the  
4 past. In 1975 one middle school, IS 59 in District  
5 29 southeast Queens sent 11 black students to  
6 Stuyvesant, 10 graduated, one was my brother Greg  
7 Skinner. A single test determined their admission.  
8 I have to ask, how did one middle school send more  
9 black kids to Stuyvesant in 1975 than the entire New  
10 York City public schools system did in 2014? Let me  
11 repeat that. How did one middle school send more  
12 black kids to Stuyvesant in 1975 than the entire New  
13 York City public system did in 2014? What has  
14 changed in the years between 1975 and 2014? In 1975,  
15 the black and Latino communities were aware of the  
16 specialized high schools early on. My brother's  
17 fourth grade teacher recommended him that he go to  
18 Stuy. Today, families have not heard of the  
19 specialized high schools. In fact, I've been told  
20 that they believe they're for Asian and white  
21 students only. Gifted classes such as EGC, IGC, SP  
22 and SPE in our communities created a pipeline to the  
23 specialized high schools. Students were exposed to  
24 advanced curricula. Today, there aren't enough  
25

1  
2 gifted classes to meet demand, and they are  
3 nonexistent in black and Latino communities.  
4 Students are not exposed to advanced curricula. Test  
5 prep was available at IS 59 Queens after school. The  
6 DREAM Specialized High Schools Institute Program is  
7 promising, but families don't know about it. The  
8 pipeline from black and Latino communities to the  
9 specialized high schools is broken. How do we fix  
10 it? When whole communities are lacking information  
11 about school choice, how can they plan a different  
12 course of action? We have learned from the medical  
13 community that early detection is key to successfully  
14 treating disease. Similarly, access to the  
15 specialized high schools requires early communication  
16 and intervention. So, where do we go from here?  
17 Don't reinvent the wheel by adding multiple measures  
18 before examining the past and learning what worked.  
19 Let's work together. I am happy to offer my service  
20 to examine and evaluate proposed solutions. I'd like  
21 to leave you with two thoughts. The same year that  
22 IS 59 sent 11 black students to Stuyvesant it also  
23 sent 15 black students to Brooklyn Tech. Ask your  
24 constituents and the group here, your family,  
25 friends, and neighbors, would you be interested in an

1  
2 opportunity to get a superior world renowned high  
3 school education for your child for free? The time  
4 to begin the conversation about specialized high  
5 schools is not in the seventh grade. It is now.  
6 Thank you very much for your time.

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

9 UNIDENTIFIED: I'm going to read from  
10 this. My name is Deborah Crowland [sic]. My  
11 daughter's a freshman at Stuyvesant high school, and  
12 I urge you to please vote no on Resolution 442. I  
13 believe strongly that the SHSAT is unbiased,  
14 objective and transparent. It does not take into  
15 account race, religion, ethnic origin, gender,  
16 economic background, or sexual orientation. Using  
17 the SHSAT as the only entry criteria ensures that the  
18 enrolled students will meet the criteria for being  
19 successful at the schools. If the standards are  
20 lowered and the schools kept the same, high  
21 standards, then some students may not be able to  
22 perform well at the school. This would not be good  
23 for student's success or for becoming productive  
24 adults. The city needs to better prepare students  
25 for entry into these specialized high schools if they

1 would like to change the racial demographics of these  
2 schools. The city should focus on improving academic  
3 performance at the lower performing elementary and  
4 middle schools. For many students, this is more than  
5 just offering test prep on eighth grade. The changes  
6 need to start in kindergarten. There are currently  
7 other good public high school choices in New York  
8 City besides the specialized high schools, La  
9 Guardia, Beacon, Bard, Millennium, Townsend Harris.  
10 Rather than changing the entry criteria for the  
11 specialized high schools, I believe the city should  
12 focus on improving education at the other schools.  
13 Not all students are mathematicians or scientists.  
14 Some are writers, artists, mechanics, plumbers, or  
15 electricians. If the city had more vocational high  
16 schools and more good high school choices that can  
17 nurture student's diverse interests for both academic  
18 and nonacademic subjects, then all students in the  
19 city could benefit. By having many types of good  
20 school choices in the city, some using the SHSAT as  
21 the only criteria and some using other criteria it  
22 ensures that all type of students can receive a good  
23 education and become productive citizens. Please  
24 vote no on Resolution 442.  
25

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you all  
3 for coming in. I'm going to move right to the next  
4 panel because we still have an awful lot of people to  
5 come up. I told you the other night I'm going bring  
6 it for you. Alright, thank you for coming in.  
7 Christina Alfonso, Stuyvesant High School Alumni, Soo  
8 Kim, Stuyvesant High School Alumni, Keiran Carpen,  
9 Stuyvesant panel, Romeo Alexander, I believe,  
10 Stuyvesant, Wai Wah Chin [sp?] also Stuyvesant.  
11 Okay, alright. So let me ask you to raise your right  
12 hand. Do you solemnly swear or affirm to tell the  
13 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, and  
14 to answer Council Member questions honestly? Okay,  
15 thank you. And who would like to begin? Alright.

16 CHRISTINA ALFONSO: Good evening  
17 everyone. I applaud everyone for being here still.  
18 I know it's been a very long day. My name is  
19 Christina Alfonso. I'm a Stuyvesant Alum, and I'm one  
20 of the Directors on the Stuyvesant High School Alumni  
21 Association, and for the past two and a half years  
22 I've also served as Chair of the Diversity Committee.  
23 My fellow alumni at this table and I would urge you  
24 to vote against Resolution 442, and I'm going to  
25 provide you with some reasons why. First of all,

1  
2 changing the admissions criteria to include grades,  
3 state test scores and potentially more subjective  
4 factors won't necessarily lead to the intended racial  
5 outcomes, because the reality is that disparities in  
6 academic outcomes start very early on. We've heard  
7 this from several other speakers today. Therefore,  
8 the disparities need to be tackled at their  
9 inception, and this leads me into my second point,  
10 that there are many more effective ways the city can  
11 improve diversity at these schools including by not  
12 limited to targeted outreach--we've heard this  
13 multiple times today--making sure that students are  
14 aware of the SHSAT and the specialized schools well  
15 before the eighth grade. Advanced and SP classes in  
16 every middle school, this is something that many  
17 alums have had the opportunity to take in the 1980's  
18 and 90's, and then these programs were discontinued.  
19 Free after school test preparation to anyone who is  
20 interested, and restructuring of the Discovery  
21 Program to focus on students in underrepresented zip  
22 codes. We heard a lot earlier today about the need  
23 to open opportunities for all, and by taking these  
24 steps, that would certainly be a step in the right  
25 direction. It's also imperative to not change a

1  
2 system that has worked for so many years. Having  
3 students who are ill prepared to handle the extremely  
4 rigorous coursework will not benefit them or the  
5 other students who are academically ready, and can  
6 even serve to tarnish the reputation of these  
7 schools, which have been the gems and shining light  
8 of the New York City public schools system for  
9 decades. And also, as a way for immigrant children,  
10 many of whom are from impoverished backgrounds on a  
11 path to upward mobility. Finally, I'd like to add  
12 that for many black and Latino alums, Stuyvesant and  
13 the other specialized schools were a place where  
14 diversity and acceptance were intertwined because  
15 everyone overcame the same hurdles for admission.  
16 One alum, named Lisa Jones, who submitted testimony  
17 wrote something that I'm going to quote right now.  
18 She said, "My Stuyvesant experience let me know that  
19 something better is possible. The experience of  
20 diversity with acceptance has caused me and all of my  
21 fellow alums to show up carrying that possibility to  
22 the world, and I think it's important for the next  
23 generation of leaders to be able to experience the  
24 same." And with that, I would like to introduce one  
25 of the next generation of leaders, Keiran Carpen

1  
2 [sp?], who was elected Student Union President at  
3 Stuyvesant High School, and just about an hour ago  
4 learned of his acceptance to Harvard. So,  
5 congratulations.

6 [applause]

7 KEIRAN CARPEN: Thank you. Okay. Hello,  
8 my name is Keiran Carpen, and as announced before, I  
9 am the Student Union President of Stuyvesant High  
10 School. I'm a current senior. So, basically, I was  
11 born and raised in South Ozone Park, Queens, a very  
12 small environment. I went to school of a graduating  
13 class of 60, and being transitioned--oh, apologize.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] We're  
15 not usually open this late. So we have to stop for  
16 construction. Alright, let's try this again. Oh,  
17 no.

18 [off mic]

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Do be careful what  
20 you say, because it's still recording and it picked  
21 up your voice. Do you want to proceed? Okay, just  
22 speak as loud as you can.

23 KEIRAN CARPEN: Okay. Okay. So, I'll  
24 start over. My name is Keiran Carpen and I'm the  
25 current Student Union President at Stuyvesant High



1 School, and basically I was born in a not as affluent  
2 area as Tribeca in which I go to school and now in  
3 Southern Queens. And one that I've noticed is that I  
4 didn't hear about the SHSAT until two months before  
5 the exam was actually administered, and basically I  
6 had one of those cram sessions, which I had to  
7 purchase a book. I was fortunately able to have a  
8 prep course that was able to prepare me sufficiently  
9 enough that I was able to get in. However, amongst  
10 getting my acceptance letter into Stuyvesant High  
11 School I realized that I was only accepted by three  
12 points, and me being of an African-American descent  
13 was already aware of, you know, the large discrepancy  
14 and the disparity in the ethnic breakdown at  
15 Stuyvesant. So that caused a lot of anxiety, and it  
16 was definitely troublesome, and it caused a lot of  
17 apprehension in terms of whether or not I was willing  
18 to go there, whether I was willing to commute from my  
19 small school in southern Queens and go all the way to  
20 southern Manhattan to, you know, seek this  
21 opportunity. And one thing that I realized at  
22 Stuyvesant is that the true lack of diversity at  
23 Stuyvesant originates from the lack of dissemination  
24 of information. I came into the school only getting  
25

1  
2 accepted by three points, and for those who aren't  
3 exactly familiar with the SHSAT it's out of 800  
4 points. So, whereas the cutoff in my year was 565, I  
5 received a score of 568. And although as an African-  
6 American descent, what I realized is that that was in  
7 no way indicative of the success that I was destined  
8 to or that I could have attained being a student at  
9 Stuyvesant. It still provided me with the same  
10 opportunities as my other cohorts that weren't of the  
11 same ethnicity. And I realized that it's not that we  
12 need to promote diversity through other methods  
13 that's not this meritocracy that is created by the  
14 SHSAT, but there's just a sheer lack of  
15 understandance and ignorance that is spread, that  
16 isn't shared throughout these schools and the middle  
17 schools throughout New York City. And if I, a  
18 student who only scored three on this, three points  
19 high enough to achieve a spot in Stuyvesant, was able  
20 to become the Student Leader President and was able  
21 to, you know, be able to get accepted into Harvard,  
22 and was able to achieve this success, I do not think  
23 that it is because--that is necessarily diversity  
24 should be promoted based on other factors that are  
25 not the test. I feel like there's a sheer lack of

1 information that goes out to these schools, and I'll  
2 leave you with two statistics. One statistic that I  
3 confirmed yesterday was that the--when you look at  
4 the ethnic breakdown of our middle school and our  
5 elementary schools, it is not at all correspondent to  
6 the ethnic breakdown of students that take the SHSAT,  
7 and I feel like if you were to even do another  
8 statistical analysis and see how many of the students  
9 that take the SHSAT were actually prepared, were  
10 actually notified that there is an exam, that there  
11 is a specialized high school, you know, months before  
12 the exam, such as the Asian-American Cohorts and some  
13 of my classmates who have had adequate time to  
14 prepare, it's shockingly alarming, and it's--there's  
15 a huge discrepancy in terms of, you know, the more  
16 impoverished areas and the affluent areas and the  
17 schools that are privileged to have this information  
18 known, and these schools unfortunately aren't as  
19 privileged and do not have that opportunity. So, I  
20 feel like the reason that the test should still  
21 remain is that it does create this fair meritocracy  
22 in which students are allowed to be administered  
23 based on their intellects and based on the fact that  
24 they can succeed a specialized high school. However,  
25

1  
2 the lack of diversity is more systemic and it is a  
3 problem of a lack of information that is being shared  
4 amongst these students in the middle schools. And  
5 sorry, I have one more point. Earlier it was  
6 mentioned on a previous panel that there are  
7 diversity initiatives at Stuyvesant, and as the  
8 Student Body President I have attended some of these  
9 initiatives, and of the 600 parents of African-  
10 American and Latino descent, not many of them knew  
11 what they were coming to Stuyvesant for. They did  
12 not know what the SHSAT stood for. They didn't know  
13 what was the nature of the test, where they can  
14 apply, if there was a fee, and I realized that  
15 there's a lot of information that has been shared  
16 today that there is just sheer ignorance throughout  
17 New York City in terms of their--not all students and  
18 not all schools receive the same information. Thank  
19 you.

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

22 SOO KIM: Thank you, Keiran. And thank  
23 you counselors. My name is Soo Kim, and I'm a proud  
24 graduate of the New York City public schools system.  
25 I immigrated here when I was five years old. I

1  
2 learned English watching Sesame Street and attended  
3 public schools throughout Queens. I graduated from  
4 Stuyvesant in 1993. After graduating from Princeton,  
5 I came back to live and work in the city that I love.  
6 I started my Wall Street career here at Banker's  
7 Trust, and seven years ago I started my own  
8 investment management firm, which directly employs 14  
9 other people here in New York. I currently live on  
10 the Upper West Side with my wife and my young  
11 daughter. I come to you as the President of the  
12 Stuyvesant High School Alumni Association. We  
13 appreciate the time that we've been given to share  
14 with the City Council some thoughts before you vote  
15 on Resolution 442. The SHSAT results when viewed  
16 through a demographic lens paint an unacceptable  
17 picture. The number of black and Latino students  
18 that qualify for the top specialized high schools is  
19 a travesty. There is clearly a serious achievement  
20 gap for certain minority groups in neighborhoods, but  
21 don't shoot the messenger. The results on the  
22 admissions test is not unlike the results evident in  
23 city and statewide tests given at elementary and  
24 middle schools. Similar achievement gaps are evident  
25 long before the student sits for this exam. The

1  
2 solution cannot be to effectively eliminate the  
3 objective measure. Throwing out a thermostat that  
4 tells you how cold it is in the room will not heat  
5 the room. Even if this measure effort were to  
6 succeed, at some point in one's life you will face  
7 objective measures. Perhaps it'll be in the process  
8 of getting to college, since most colleges still  
9 require the SAT, or it will be your first steps after  
10 graduating from college where, you know, many fields  
11 require testing for admissions to academies and  
12 further professional schools. Eventually, each and  
13 every graduate will be measured objectively. We  
14 citizens of New York should all be outraged about the  
15 demographic achievement gap, but we would suggest  
16 tackling the problem directly in the schools and the  
17 neighborhoods that are failing a large portion of  
18 these communities. Instead of spending time debating  
19 a state law in City Council, let's work with the city  
20 and the Department of Education to address the root  
21 causes and change outcomes. Thank you.

22                   ROMEO ALEXANDER: Hello? Hello, my name  
23 is Romeo Alexander, and I am currently a PHC student  
24 in mathematics at NYU Courant Institute. I am an  
25 alumnus of Stuyvesant Class of 2007, and I'm here to

1  
2 urge you to vote no on resolution 442 and keep the  
3 exam as a sole criteria for admission. The  
4 experience of preparing for that exam was one of the  
5 most productive and intensive experiences of my life.  
6 I learned more math than in many other periods of my  
7 life, and if the exam wasn't the sole criteria I'm  
8 not sure I would have gone through the same amount of  
9 preparation. And then, once I got to Stuyvesant, one  
10 of the most unique and best things about my time  
11 there was that all of my classmates had also gone  
12 through that process and I was surrounded by other  
13 very talented people and they are some of my best  
14 friends now, and they continue to inspire me. When I  
15 was applying to the specialized science high schools,  
16 they were specialized science high schools, and I  
17 also participated in the Math Science Institute, and  
18 for some reason the science name got dropped out and  
19 they're not referred to as a specialized high  
20 schools. I'm still not sure why, but for me, the  
21 fact that Stuyvesant is a science high school was  
22 always important to me, and I feel like it's  
23 precisely because it's a science high school that an  
24 exam that focuses on math and logic is precisely a  
25 very appropriate way of determining admission. That

1  
2 I was only one of a small percentage of black  
3 students at Stuy definitely does concern me, but I  
4 feel like there are other ways of addressing the  
5 problem. Everybody experiences this differently. It  
6 definitely would have been better. My father  
7 definitely was a lot more affected by the lack of  
8 other black students than me. It took me a while to  
9 realize it, but if anything, I could say that my time  
10 at Harvard, which has a more open admissions criteria  
11 you could say, I possibly experienced more racism  
12 there than at Stuyvesant. So it's not always clear  
13 to me that--the correlation between the prevalence of  
14 racism and the negative aspects of discrimination  
15 can't always be clearly went to the presence or  
16 absence of an exam. Now, I'm doing what I love,  
17 doing math, pursuing a PHD, and I total attribute  
18 that to my time at Stuyvesant, and I think the exam  
19 was an important part of it.

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

22 WAI WAH CHIN: Thank you. I'm Wai Wah  
23 Chin, I'm a parent at Stuyvesant and a member of the  
24 School Leadership Team, and I was also a former Co-  
25 President of the Parent Association. I'd like to



1 point out again that our schools are really  
2 communities that are built not just by the students  
3 and the alums and the staff, but also by the parents  
4 and the family. And just as the Parents Association  
5 work with our kids on the extracurricular and  
6 academics inside the school, outside we also have  
7 that same active duty and responsibility as well as  
8 love of doing that for our children. So, at the  
9 Parents Association the general membership as well as  
10 the Executive Board overwhelmingly, nearly  
11 unanimously elected to support not changing the  
12 SHSAT, and we did it because we believe very much  
13 that this test serves our students and it serves the  
14 schools, and we want to encourage different people to  
15 come into the school. We want it to be diverse and  
16 open, but at the same time, we want to make sure that  
17 the process is good, and so that's why we oppose Reso  
18 442. We believe that keeping to a single, uniform,  
19 objective academic test is the fairest way to admit  
20 the brightest and best prepared students in to our  
21 specialized high schools, and the test covers basic  
22 skills. I know that somebody had said that, "Well,  
23 this doesn't really cover things that we need to  
24 know." but that's not true. If you look at the test  
25

1  
2 it covers basic math. It covers basic English, the  
3 skills that are learned over years, so it's not just  
4 in a cram course. If you look at Keiran, he didn't  
5 really need it, you know. If he took it a little bit  
6 earlier, he might have gotten many more points, but  
7 he was already prepared through school. If you fail  
8 to meet the cutoff for one school, you could get to  
9 another school. We should have plenty of schools  
10 that the kids could go to. It's not a one day, high  
11 stake, high stress test. And the test is objective  
12 so that money and connections don't count. I think  
13 that other people have talked about that. A lot of  
14 our parents speak no English and they work multiple  
15 jobs because over half of our kids are on free or  
16 reduced lunch. So we serve the poor and the  
17 underprivileged. So, I think that what we all agree  
18 on is that we can do more outreach. We, a lot of the  
19 Stuy Alums already do outreach. Our staff and  
20 students go out and provide free tutoring for a lot  
21 of students, but I think we really face still the  
22 basic problem that we have a test that is our friend.  
23 It is not our enemy. It is actually confirming what  
24 the state assessments have. We have four levels  
25 there. There's one, two, three, and four. Level one

1  
2 and two are fail. Number three is pass. Number four  
3 is high pass, and when you have 2.1 percent being  
4 high pass we have to change that. And we all here at  
5 Stuyvesant would welcome that because if you solve  
6 the problem--and bring the parents into this  
7 equation. We're part of the solution. Then, what we  
8 can do is because the test is objective, it will  
9 ensure that more blacks and Latinos will be able to  
10 come into Stuyvesant and the other schools. And it's  
11 not the test. You know, we have to fix K to eight.  
12 We have to raise that 2.1, and then I believe the  
13 entire city would benefit, and that's why we all urge  
14 you to vote against 442. Thank you so much.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much,  
16 and I'm going to call up the next panel immediately.  
17 We only have until 7:00 p.m. in this room, so I hope  
18 that we can get through the people who have remained  
19 to testify. I'm going to have to really ask  
20 everybody to stick to that timer. Stanley  
21 Lumenstien, Doctor Ivan Kahn, Santiago Munoz [sp?],  
22 Vincent Galasso, Jonathan Roberts. Okay, would you  
23 raise your right hands, please? Raise your right  
24 hand please. Thank you. Do you solemnly swear or  
25 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing

1  
2 but the truth, and to answer Council Member questions  
3 honestly? Thank you. Would you like to begin?

4 JOHNATHAN ROBERTS: Sure. My name is  
5 Johnathan Roberts. I am Vice Chair of the Bronx  
6 Science Alumni Association. I'm going to give you  
7 the very short version. We live in the world's  
8 greatest city.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Any  
10 person that gives a short version gets extra credit  
11 on the standardized test.

12 JOHNATHAN ROBERTS: Yes. Thank you. We  
13 live in the world's greatest city, but we are facing  
14 a crisis in pre-high school education, pre-high  
15 school education. Eighty-four percent of our black  
16 and Latino seventh graders, our black and Latino  
17 seventh graders just failed the New York State  
18 proficiency standards in math and the English.  
19 That's outrageous, but changing the admissions  
20 criteria for the specialized high schools does  
21 absolutely nothing to prepare kids for high school.  
22 Changing the admissions criteria for the specialized  
23 high schools does absolutely nothing to prepare to  
24 help these kids. The specialized high school  
25 admissions test is a spot light shining on these

1 inequities in pre-high school education. Please keep  
2 that spot light on so we can fix the inequities and  
3 raise all children up to meet these standards.  
4 That's the only reasonable way to get more of our  
5 black and Latino students into the specialized high  
6 schools. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

9 IVAN KAHN: Good evening everyone. My  
10 name is Doctor Ivan Kahn, CEO at Kahn's Tutorial and  
11 a graduate of the Bronx High School Science, Class of  
12 1999. I'm providing this testimony in opposition to  
13 Resolution 442. Over the past 20 years our team at  
14 Kahn's Tutorials helped over 1,625 low income New  
15 Yorkers across the outer boroughs get admission to  
16 New York City specialized high schools. The vast  
17 majority of them took their training two blocks away  
18 from your office, Chairman Dromm, and we appreciate  
19 all the work that you do in our community. Over the-  
20 -in March of 2014 we helped a record number of 185  
21 students get admission. After personally working  
22 with low income New Yorkers for the past 16 years, I  
23 speak before you today to share our vision for  
24 increased diversity of New York City's specialized  
25 high schools while maintaining and objective

1 admissions criteria. Firstly, I would like to state  
2 that an objective single test admissions criteria has  
3 proven to increase diversity of the specialized high  
4 schools. In fact, as someone mentioned before, at  
5 Staten Island Technical High School, the number of  
6 African-American and Hispanic students increased when  
7 changing from a holistic admissions process to a  
8 single test admissions method about 10 years ago. A  
9 holistic admissions process already exists as many of  
10 you found out today. With holistic screening  
11 approach led to schools such as Townsend, Harrison,  
12 Queens, or Beacon in Manhattan where the median  
13 family income is much higher when compared to that of  
14 a student from Stuyvesant, Bronx Science or Brooklyn  
15 Tech. Ultimately, the percentage of Caucasian  
16 students is generally higher in New York City  
17 screened high school than at a specialized high  
18 school, and the student body happens to be much  
19 wealthier at a screened high school. The inclusion  
20 of subjective criteria such as essays,  
21 extracurricular activities, interviews and even GPA  
22 places poorer, less privileged 12 year old students  
23 in a much worse battle than their wealthier  
24 counterparts. By the admission of the Department of  
25

1  
2 Education themselves, public schools receive  
3 different grades from the DOE, making it impossible  
4 to compare GPA's across the city. An A minus in  
5 district 10 in the Bronx is very different from an A  
6 minus in District 26 in Queens or District 20 in  
7 Brooklyn. An A minus in District 26 in the Bronx  
8 where less than 20 percent of students are reading at  
9 grade level and where passing rates on certain  
10 reading start as low as 30 percent is very different  
11 from an A minus in District 26 where the lowest  
12 passing rate is 65 percent. The sad reality is that  
13 New York City's public school is failing in many  
14 communities. That's been talked about to death  
15 today. Since 1994, the vast majority of students  
16 gaining admissions have been new immigrant families  
17 from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Trinidad, more  
18 recently African-American and Hispanic students.  
19 Similar to generations of New York's before us, we  
20 all came here to archive the American dream. Many  
21 people spoke about that. I have a wonderful young man  
22 next to me who we'd love to hear form in a few  
23 minutes, but before I hand it over to him I'd like to  
24 reiterate please do not change the admissions  
25 criteria. Instead, work towards improving our middle

1 schools, work towards providing free tutoring in  
2 underrepresented communities, eliminate the  
3 registration process so that every New York City  
4 public schools eighth grader can take the SHSAT,  
5 offer the exam twice to reduce test anxiety, and  
6 overall, increase awareness about the exam and the  
7 different opportunities suited for different  
8 families. This past spring, Kahn's Tutorial awarded  
9 18 scholarships totaling 100,000 dollars to provide  
10 free tutoring for the SHSAT to 18 students from  
11 African-American/Hispanic families. I'm sorry to  
12 say, Councilman Dromm, only three out of ten junior  
13 high schools in your district, the neighboring  
14 district decided to participate in the offering that  
15 information to the top performing African-American  
16 and Hispanic students. We are relaunching that  
17 scholarship opportunity again and the main reason is  
18 we want to increase awareness for underrepresented  
19 communities and we plan to announce our 20 winners,  
20 or new winners for 2014 on Martin Luther King weekend  
21 next month. I leave you today urging you to hear our  
22 voice. Preserve the SHSAT. Please increase  
23 diversity while maintaining an objective admissions  
24 criteria. Thank you.  
25



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

4 SANTIAGO MUNOZ: Hello, my name is  
5 Santiago Munoz, and I'm a current student at Bronx  
6 Science. I support efforts to raise diversity at  
7 NYC's specialized high schools, but I don't believe  
8 that altering that criteria is the right way to  
9 proceed with this. In my opinion, the problem  
10 causing a lack of diversity in these schools such as  
11 Bronx Science, which I attend, or Stuyvesant or  
12 Brooklyn Tech isn't the SHSAT, it's the unequal  
13 educational resources and opportunities given to  
14 different sections of the city. Most Hispanics and  
15 African-American live in low income neighborhoods  
16 where educational resources and opportunities are  
17 difficult to obtain compared to other parts of the  
18 city such as like the upper west side of Manhattan or  
19 lower east side, I mean upper east side. For  
20 example, a student [sic] in Far Rockaway, my sister  
21 who attended Brooklyn Tech, when she was preparing  
22 for her SHSAT, she only found out two months  
23 beforehand. And my dad, my family, we couldn't afford  
24 tutoring so she had to do it herself. Thankfully, she  
25 was able to get to Brooklyn Tech and now she when

1  
2 onto college where she attends Yale. Also, me, like,  
3 it's difficult for people like me who live in low  
4 income neighborhoods, because in addition to having  
5 inability to afford tutoring, we also don't know a  
6 lot about the schools. When my sister got into  
7 Brooklyn Tech, she didn't even know it was 5,000  
8 kids. I remember when I was preparing for the SHSAT  
9 I had to borrow a book from the library for an entire  
10 year, and a I accumulated a huge debt, but that was  
11 the only way I could study, and that really shouldn't  
12 happen in a city like New York. I think that people  
13 are focusing on the wrong solution to fix this  
14 diversity problem. Instead of changing how students  
15 are admitted to the school, we should change how  
16 people prepare for the admissions, and I think we  
17 should reform the middle schools before we try to  
18 reform the high schools. Thank you.

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

21 VINCENT GALASSO: Good evening. My name  
22 is Vincent Galasso. I served at the Bronx High School  
23 of Science for over 30 years, including more than  
24 four years as principal.

25 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Is your mic on?

1  
2 VINCENT GALASSO: Oh, sorry. Should I  
3 start again? Please start again.

4 VINCENT GALASSO: Okay. My name is  
5 Vincent Galasso. I served at the Bronx High School of  
6 Science for more than 30 years, including more than  
7 four years as principal. I am here to speak against  
8 Resolution 442, specifically its conclusion that the  
9 New York State Legislature pass and the Governor  
10 sign, and you know, the Assembly A9979 Senate 7738A  
11 [sic], to change the admission criteria for New York  
12 City specialized high school. The suggested plans  
13 for utilizing multiple criteria for selecting  
14 students for the three original specialized high  
15 schools are flawed. I can only talk about the three  
16 because that's been my experience. Using GPA's from  
17 lower levels would not be fair, since there is no  
18 uniformity from school to school in either the  
19 curriculum or the grading. The use of essays as part  
20 of the selection process, assuming 40,000 candidates  
21 would be time consuming, expensive and extremely  
22 subjective. Attendance data can be tainted by  
23 judgment decision regarding what constitutes excused  
24 versus unexcused absences. Even using the statewide  
25 exams can be flawed. There have been a number of

1 well publicized cases where there's been serious  
2 breaches of security and deliberate actions by  
3 teachers or administrators to improve test results.  
4 As all past principals at Bronx Science can attest,  
5 we have been asked to do something about accepting  
6 students who did not make the cutoff for the school.  
7 Our response was to simple say that New York State  
8 Law dictates that the SHSAT determines who is  
9 accepted directly or offered a position in a  
10 Discovery Program. We had an active Discovery  
11 Program when I was principal. Therefore, principals  
12 had the means to avoid undue pressure and time  
13 wasting tactics of parents, elected officials and  
14 other dignitaries. One of the unintended  
15 consequences of Resolution 442 if enacted would be to  
16 shift a Singular pressure that of acceptance from the  
17 specialized high school principals to multiple lines  
18 of pressure, grades, attendance, statewide exams to  
19 large numbers of teachers and administrators across  
20 the city. The collective time laws dealing with  
21 these issues will be monumental and likely lead to  
22 inconsistencies and possible illegal activity. The  
23 success of the Bronx High School of Science program  
24 is dependent upon its students, its faculty, its  
25

1 curriculum, parents and over the last two decades,  
2 its alumni. The success of the school is undeniable.  
3 Each year, virtually 100 percent of the senior class  
4 graduation goes on to higher learning. More than 50  
5 percent eventually wind up working in science,  
6 engineering, law, etcetera, and as we all know, eight  
7 of the graduates have won Nobel Prizes. I'd like to  
8 divert from the written testimony and just say a  
9 couple of things quickly. One is that what is it  
10 that makes Bronx Science a specialized high school?  
11 Well, your kids and the curriculum and so on, but  
12 more than that, you have to be there to see a ninth  
13 grade biology class in action to understand that the  
14 qualities that the entrance exam test for is what we  
15 need in that classroom before us. I've taught lessons  
16 when I was a biology teacher that the students could  
17 actually deduce experiments, results that led to  
18 Nobel Prizes and that is why if you had gone to Bronx  
19 Science two nights ago, you would have seen more than  
20 100 students demonstrating their individual  
21 scientific projects. It's this kind of work that  
22 makes the school a specialized high school, and it's  
23 the exam that brings us the students to carry out  
24 these activities. Thank you.  
25

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

3 STANLEY BLUMENSTIEN: Hello, my name is  
4 Stanley Blumenstien. I am a graduate, a former  
5 Assistant Principal, and the fifth principal now  
6 retired of the Bronx High School of Science, and I  
7 greatly thank you for this opportunity to speak  
8 before you. I am testifying in opposition to  
9 Resolution 442. The specialized high schools in the  
10 city of New York are truly the crown jewels of public  
11 education, recognized not only for their  
12 extraordinary success on a city level, but on a world  
13 stage as well. We know that there have been eight  
14 Bronx Science alumni receiving the Nobel Laureate and  
15 six having won the Pulitzer Prize, and our school has  
16 more Westinghouse semi-finalists than any other  
17 school in the nation. So therefore, to tamper with  
18 the admission process in any way whatsoever, short  
19 sided and an invitation for disaster. People have  
20 asked for the validation, a validation of the test.  
21 The validation of the test is seen in the illustrious  
22 and outstanding world class success of its graduates.  
23 Clearly, the founding fathers of Bronx Science and  
24 the other specialized schools designed schools that  
25 work at the very highest levels, a school that not

1  
2 only has realized its mission, but has surpassed even  
3 the wildest dreams of those who created the school.  
4 And what was that mission, the mission of Bronx  
5 Science? Its mission then and today is to create  
6 opportunities for the city's brightest and for those  
7 who are the most gifted and talented to prosper and  
8 develop into the nation's leaders. Let's go back in  
9 history a bit. The clouds of war were on the horizon  
10 when the Bronx Science was formed. It was conceived  
11 in 1938, and school at that time helped the nation at  
12 war's need for an inventive, creative scientist and  
13 engineers. The dangers to our country today are no  
14 less than they were back in 1938, and so the school's  
15 mission is as important today as it was 76 years ago.  
16 We must not change the formula for success that has  
17 helped mold the leaders upon which our nation  
18 depends. Now we're all dismayed about the lack of  
19 diversity in the specialized schools, but diversity  
20 that does not match the ethnic and racial makeup of  
21 the city. And while we all support diversity, that  
22 is not the goal of the specialized schools. The real  
23 question then is can we increase the number of  
24 underrepresented minorities in the specialized  
25 schools without effecting the school's primary

1 mission? I believe there are many ways, but not by  
2 circumventing the objective exam. Let me give you a  
3 little bit of my experience as principal. When I was  
4 principal, I received numerous phone calls from  
5 elected officials of all areas of government  
6 requesting that I do them a favor by accepting a  
7 child from one of their constituents, a nice boy, a  
8 nice girl from a nice family. Of course, I could  
9 not. Could you imagine a system in which the test  
10 was not sacrosanct? The integrity of the admission  
11 process would be destroyed. It would become porous  
12 and open to all kinds of unholy pressures. Is that  
13 what we want with students who could not score well  
14 on an exam testing mathematical and verbal acuity be  
15 able to succeed on the advanced placement and college  
16 level curricula that are *Syne qua non* [sic] of the  
17 specialized high schools? I'm afraid not. We must  
18 look at the bigger picture, and of course, any honest  
19 appraisal would point to the lack of preparation for  
20 students in grades K through eight. Again, when I  
21 was principal we conducted, and Vince as well, a  
22 program with various districts in the Bronx and in  
23 upper Manhattan to train with our teachers the middle  
24 school teachers from these districts, most of whom  
25



1  
2 are embarrassingly lacking in science and math  
3 skills. The city needs to invest more to ensure the  
4 presence of top notch teachers in the lower grades,  
5 and of course, to create more gifted programs. Many  
6 of the students as we said have taken prep courses  
7 for the specialized high school. I recall that some  
8 students even took a course in Taiwan before coming  
9 to the US. The city clearly needs to offer more prep  
10 courses for those who can't afford the private ones.  
11 And of course, we all say that better communication  
12 is sorely needed with the middle schools. Last but  
13 not least, the Discovery program created by the Hecht  
14 Calandra Act was successful in increasing the racial  
15 and ethnic diversity of Bronx Science when I was  
16 principal. The Discover Program should be reinstated.  
17 In conclusion, the exam that has been used for  
18 generations is objective, color blind and highly  
19 successful. To tamper with a process that works by  
20 introducing subjective criteria would undermine the  
21 schools in which we all take such pride. We must not  
22 be fooled into diverting our attention from the root  
23 cause of the underrepresentation of minorities. The  
24 real inequity lies in the deficient preparation that

1  
2 some students receive, and that is where our efforts  
3 and our finances should be directed. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Just wish  
5 you hadn't attacked teachers, but that's okay. Thank  
6 you very much.

7 STANLEY BLUMENSTIEN: It's true.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I've met a number of  
9 doozy [sic] principals myself, so. Unbelievable.  
10 Heady Chappelle [sp?], Faye Moore, Edward Lagrassa  
11 [sp?], Michael Weiss, and Ray Feige. And by the way,  
12 I'm cutting everybody down to two minutes, Sergeant,  
13 because we have to leave.

14 HEADY CHAPPELLE: Are we supposed to sit  
15 in that order? I'm Heady.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, I'm going to add  
17 to this panel Jennifer Krueger [sp?], Mark Schulty  
18 [sp?]. Mark Schulty here? Lisa Cangrow Temperberg  
19 [sp?], no? Sammie Rob? Frank Robatazzi [sp?]?  
20 Dennis Saffran? David Lee [sp?]? Is Phil Gimms  
21 [sp?] still here? Okay, you're going to be on the  
22 next panel. Michael Benjamin? Alright, you'll be on  
23 the next panel. Dennis Saffran? Okay, that's our  
24 next panel. Alright. Did I hear David Lee is here?  
25 Oh, come on up. Come on up. Okay, would you all

1  
2 raise your right hand, please? I'm going to swear you  
3 in. Do you solemnly swear or affirm to tell the  
4 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, and  
5 to answer Council Member questions honestly? Thank  
6 you. Who would like to start? Yeah, over there.

7           DAVID LEE: Thank you, Chairman. My name  
8 is David Lee. I am the Director of Coalition EDU, an  
9 organization of supporters advocating for keeping the  
10 single examination admission policy for specialized  
11 high schools of New York City. I am also an alumnus  
12 of Brooklyn Tech and a parent of an alumnus of Bronx  
13 Science High School. I'd like to show you that we do  
14 have 600 names on a petition that we collected in one  
15 day walking down the streets of what they call  
16 Brooklyn China Town. I am opposed to Resolution 442.  
17 For the last nine months as a volunteer I have been  
18 immersed in the specialized high school admission  
19 issue daily. In that time I've garnered the support  
20 of thousands and have had an open dialogue with the  
21 press, leaders of the NAACP, the UFT, and numerous  
22 politicians who are willing to listen. The other  
23 testimonies today will no doubt explain all the  
24 reasons why the SHSAT should remain the sole criteria  
25 for admission. Of all the facets of this issue I take

1 away two glaring points from my experience so far.  
2 First, the initiative to increase underrepresented  
3 minorities at these schools is indeed a worthy and  
4 admirable cause. However, A9979 will cause  
5 devastating collateral impact by the displacement of  
6 an economically disadvantaged minority from these  
7 schools. Today, that minority happens to be Asian-  
8 Americans. If A9979 was enacted in 1976 when I  
9 attended Brooklyn Tech, the collateral impact would  
10 have unfairly displaced African-Americans who are  
11 almost 50 percent of the school at that time. The  
12 point is that the enrollment is a zero sum gain.  
13 Enrollment should be based on an unbiased merit  
14 rather than at the whim of a politician or a special  
15 interest group. The intention is good, but the  
16 solution is wrong. My second takeaway is the abysmal  
17 state of public education for the majority of K  
18 through eight students. When only 15 percent of  
19 black and Hispanic middle school students are high  
20 school ready, according to the New York State  
21 assessment test, and less than three percent are  
22 highly proficient, what opportunity is being given to  
23 these students for entering the rigorous specialized  
24 high schools. There are a number of proposals that  
25

1  
2 were mentioned before and I support them for  
3 improving access to the schools. The specialized  
4 high schools are renowned for their rigor and  
5 accomplishments of their alumni. I believe that the  
6 resolution should not be voted on to pass. Thank  
7 you.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next,  
9 please?

10 JENNIFER KRUEGER: My name is Jennifer  
11 Krueger, and I'm here to advocate in my role as a  
12 parent of two public schools children. I agree that  
13 there's an embarrassing lack of black and Latino  
14 students of the specialized high schools. That  
15 reflects the shameful failure of our city's public,  
16 elementary and middle school to appropriately prepare  
17 these students to be successful on such a rigorous  
18 and objective examination. What I fail to see is how  
19 making changes to the selection criteria does  
20 anything to address those failures. If our student--  
21 if our schools are failing to equip students of all  
22 backgrounds in all communities with the specific  
23 skills necessary to be successful on the SHSAT, it  
24 strikes me as odd that we're discussing doctoring the  
25 measure rather than seeking to correct the problem

1 the measure is highlighting. The SHSAT is a wholly  
2 objective, equal access measure that quantifies  
3 student performance in a way that cannot be tweaked  
4 or exploited. Moving from a purely objective measure  
5 like the SHSAT to a variety of subjective factors,  
6 report cards, attendance, punctuality, perhaps  
7 community service as Mayor de Blasio had mentioned or  
8 other increasingly nebulous measures will not address  
9 the failures of elementary and middle schools across  
10 our city to fully prepare all of its children. The  
11 problem is not the selection criteria and until those  
12 failures are addressed, no set of criteria will yield  
13 a meaningful difference in the admissions rates at  
14 those schools. Make no mistake, subjective measures  
15 like report cards, attendance or community service  
16 will be easily gamed by families of means. As the  
17 Comptroller's report reflects screened schools in New  
18 York City are currently whiter than the testing  
19 schools we are discussing. Standards like  
20 punctuality and attendance are factors that are far  
21 more reflective of poverty or poor transportation  
22 options than of ability to succeed in a specialized  
23 school. No child should be shut out of a specialized  
24 school because they are absent more than is common  
25

1  
2 because of poor healthcare or a poverty diet or late  
3 more than common because they rely on public  
4 transportation to travel to a far school. Fungible  
5 [sic] measures like citizenship or community service  
6 are absolutely more likely to benefit the children  
7 whose parents can afford to facilitate those  
8 opportunities. My boy's classmates spend their after  
9 school hours working in their family's restaurants,  
10 doing their homework at the tables, and then helping  
11 in the back until late into the night. Those kids do  
12 not have the opportunities to participate in  
13 scouting, volunteer to walk dogs at the local shelter  
14 or otherwise spare time and resources to have their  
15 citizenship resume or form their teacher  
16 recommendations. Even report card standards vary  
17 widely from school to school. It is impossible to  
18 meaningfully compare a greater--

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] I'm  
20 going to have to ask you to wrap up.

21 JENNIFER KRUEGER: I'm literally almost  
22 done. Report card standards vary widely from school  
23 to school. It's impossible to compare a grade of 90  
24 from a citywide middle school to a 90 from a school  
25 with less rigorous standards. Moving away from the

1  
2 SHSAT in favor of subjective criteria will not  
3 positively admit, effect admission rates of black and  
4 Latino students in the specialized high schools, but  
5 it will likely significantly affect admissions  
6 disparities between white and Asian students. The  
7 admissions rates for Asians currently at the  
8 specialized schools is 53 percent while admission  
9 rates for whites hover around 26 percent. To this  
10 parent, this resolution does not read as a meaningful  
11 effort to increase the number of black or Hispanic  
12 students at the specialized high schools. It reads  
13 as a measure that will ultimately increase the number  
14 of white students while decreasing the number of  
15 Asian students at those schools. Abandoning  
16 objective criteria like the SHSAT in favor of  
17 subjective measures far more easily gameable by  
18 parents of means will absolutely lead to a marked  
19 increase in the number of white students at the  
20 expense of every other group. Any move away from a  
21 single standard criteria that is equally accessible  
22 to all kids is one that will hurt the specialized  
23 schools and the students applying to attend them.  
24 Please don't participate in an endeavor that allows  
25 the city and the Department of Education to ignore



1  
2 its own failings to prepare all students with the  
3 skills necessary to succeed at a standard measure.  
4 Changing the measure only hides the problem. I urge  
5 you to oppose Resolution 442.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. I'm going  
7 to have to ask again that everybody please keep the  
8 testimony to the allotted time so that we can give  
9 everybody an opportunity who has waited to have a  
10 turn to speak.

11 FAYE MOORE: Good evening. My name is  
12 Faye Moore. I graduated from Brooklyn Technical High  
13 School in 1976. I am here to speak in opposition of  
14 the City Council Resolution 442. The Resolution  
15 provides support for bills pending in both the State  
16 Senate and Assembly that add multiple objective  
17 criteria for admission to the specialized high  
18 schools. The bill speaks of grade point averages,  
19 attendance records and admission test and state test  
20 scores as better criteria. I submit to you that  
21 these additional criteria will not diversify the  
22 student body. Grades are by their very nature  
23 subjective measurements and affect different students  
24 in different ways. A talkative student may be seen  
25 as having poor self-control and lose points in a

1 final grade. A student that doesn't speak in class  
2 may be in crisis at home and be penalized in a class  
3 that encourages participation. Attendance can be  
4 effected by external pressures like housing,  
5 employment and help of caretakers. State test scores  
6 can be impacted simply by the resources available in  
7 the school. The new criteria places the burdens of  
8 an overwhelmed educational system on the shoulders of  
9 13 year olds. It will hold them responsible for  
10 grades obtained in crowded classrooms and attendance  
11 based on external factors beyond their control. The  
12 addition of these factors does not guarantee an  
13 increase in the population of African-American and  
14 Latino students. It does guarantee a magnification  
15 of the shortfalls in the New York City public schools  
16 system and the very children you seek to assist will  
17 see more barriers, not less. I should say that I am  
18 a civil servant and have been for my entire career.  
19 I am a firm believer that merit and fitness are best  
20 measured by examinations. Additional criteria tend  
21 to help those who have more access to resources and  
22 encourage bias and criteria that may appear impartial  
23 in its language. An example would be a civil servant  
24 being promoted based on a political connection and  
25

1 not through competition on a level playing field.  
2 For a middle school student it could mean a student  
3 gaining a coveted high school seat because his GPA  
4 reflects his extra credit submission as opposed to a  
5 student residing in a shelter with barely enough room  
6 or quiet to complete her homework. Rather than  
7 burden children with this new admission criteria, I  
8 feel the Council's energy is best placed in enhancing  
9 the middle school experience. Appropriate  
10 allocations to middle school for math and science  
11 help enhance reading comprehension--

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] I'm  
13 going to have to stop you here.

14 FAYE MOORE: and social service supports.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next,  
16 please.

17 RAY FEIGE: How you doing? I'm Raye  
18 Feige. I'm a Brooklyn Tech graduate Class of '94.  
19 I'm also a parent of a recent Brooklyn Tech graduate.  
20 I'm come to you tonight as a middle class white guy  
21 from northeast Queens. Good evening to you all.  
22 Thanks for the invite. By law, we say no child shall  
23 be denied access to any school because of his or her  
24 race, color, religion, creed, gender, sexual  
25

1 orientation, or economics. I threw that last one in.  
2 Live by that law, and it should be fair to say no  
3 child shall be admitted because of his or her race,  
4 color, creed, gender, sexual orientation, or  
5 economics. For that reason, your proposal should  
6 fail. Keep the test as it has always been. It is  
7 simply not a good idea to take decades of old  
8 admissions standard, which is a straight forward,  
9 color blind aptitude test, and now propose to put in  
10 subjective factors just to fulfil some diversity  
11 matrix. It's gaming the system and it invites  
12 corruption while taking equality and want to make it  
13 unequal. This is misguided legislation. It is  
14 offensive, and clearly sends a wrong message. But  
15 here are some suggestions to increase enrollment in  
16 communities without altering the admission standards.  
17 High schools have become so competitive at the  
18 emphasis on educational excellence has to begin  
19 practically after birth. Many Asian and eastern  
20 European communities understand this. Parents impose  
21 long hours of study and not a lot of playtime,  
22 including sports. They show up with the schools and  
23 meet with the math and English teachers. Parents  
24 also seem to spend a lot of time and money in prep  
25

1  
2 courses for these tests. By all means, keep the  
3 Discovery Program. Tweak it. Expand it a few years  
4 even. Maybe even set up a handbook for all parents  
5 of incoming kindergarten students on how to navigate  
6 the educational system. Don't take this wrong way.  
7 Every community should have armies of Tiger Moms.  
8 Also, make it more economically and logistically  
9 viable for kids in far reaching communities. Public  
10 transportation may be free for them, but it can be  
11 long. The kid who lived in Far Rockaway and went to  
12 Bronx Science a year or two ago made headlines with  
13 his commute. Ironically, Bronx Science has an  
14 express school bus form various locations in Queens,  
15 but it costs upwards of about 300 dollars per month.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Can you wrap up  
17 please.

18 RAY FEIGE: Yes. The Long Island Railroad  
19 is reduced for regular monthly to around 150 per  
20 month. Not everybody could afford the time and  
21 money. Finally, build more specialized high schools.  
22 The number of kids taking the test every year is in  
23 record numbers. Those who miss the cut off by a few  
24 points, those who choose not to go at all probably  
25 number in the thousands. They are still very smart

1  
2 kids who are now basically relegated to their zoned  
3 schools, which may only have a limited number of  
4 honors program seats. They are also lumped in with  
5 the general education students. Give them schools  
6 they can take pride in and call their own. The four  
7 to 600 seat boutique specialized high schools  
8 collocated in CUNY campuses are good, but small. I  
9 suggest next time you close a failing high school,  
10 reopen it as a specialized high school. Take these  
11 suggestions and they will come from all communities  
12 in droves. Thank you.

13 HEADY CHAPPELLE: Hi, I'm Heady  
14 Chappelle. Thanks for allowing me to express my  
15 opinion. I differ in some instances. I do not  
16 believe that the standardized test, the entrance  
17 exam, is difficult. I hardly studied for it. I went  
18 to--my first choice was Brooklyn Tech, even though I  
19 lived in Manhattan, and maybe I put maybe six hours  
20 in and I passed the test. And most of my friends  
21 that went to Tech, it was the same thing. We did not  
22 find the entrance exam difficult, and that is because  
23 we had a solid K through eight educational  
24 foundation. So, I disagree all this time with a lot  
25 of people saying how difficult the test. It's

1  
2 difficult if you don't have, you know, a standardized  
3 or decent K through eight education. I'm totally  
4 against this Resolution 442 because I believe it  
5 burdens the poor, immigrants, people that might not  
6 have a lot of money. And school teachers and parents  
7 are going to be scrambling to help create some sort  
8 of portfolio for their students. They're going to  
9 try to find computer software courses that are free  
10 to register their students in, to create something.  
11 And the test is just a much simpler way of gaining  
12 admission. I was in a unique position because I,  
13 when I entered Tech in '78 there was a 50 percent  
14 drop-out rate from '78 to '79 from the specialized  
15 science high schools. I was on the honor roll every  
16 year, so my sophomore year, they asked me, Stuyvesant  
17 high school went to Tech and asked if I wanted to  
18 transfer because I lived in Manhattan. No, I wanted  
19 to stay at Tech. Well, they asked a lot of people  
20 that. Some came from the Bronx to go to Tech. NO,  
21 they didn't want to go to Bronx Science. So that's  
22 how important the test is. Fifty percent drop-out  
23 rate. The people couldn't do the curriculum. They  
24 passed the test, but they couldn't handle the  
25 curriculum. So what difference does it make if you

1  
2 have more and more and more, more and more criteria  
3 if the students can't perform and handle the  
4 curriculum. It's just another way of degrading the  
5 curriculum so people can enter, and I think there's  
6 really something strange about what's going on with K  
7 through eight. This needs to be investigated. Thank  
8 you.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you very  
10 much. And I don't mean to be rude, but I do have to  
11 do this time constraint, and I apologize to people  
12 for having to cut you off. The next panel, Michael  
13 Benjamin, Dennis Saffran, Phil Gimm, Charles Varishka  
14 [sp?], is he still here? Okay. Ying He Chin Li  
15 [sp?]? Is Ying He Chin Li here? That's you? Okay.  
16 Sylvia Ramos [sp?]? Who would like to start? Oh, I  
17 have to swear you in, please. Raise your right hand?  
18 Do you solemnly--would you all please raise your  
19 right hand? You're not going to raise your right  
20 hand?

21 MICHAEL BENJAMIN: No.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: That's a procedure  
23 here to testify.

24 MICHAEL BENJAMIN: Yeah, I know, but it's  
25 improper.



1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: That's the rules of  
3 the Council, so--

4 MICHAEL BENJAMIN: But it's improper.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Then I may not be able  
6 to let you testify.

7 MICHAEL BENJAMIN: Why not?

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Because the rules of  
9 the Council state that you need to be sworn in--

10 MICHAEL BENJAMIN: [interposing] But you  
11 wouldn't want to rely [sic] swearing in, would you?

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Excuse me?

13 MICHAEL BENJAMIN: Would you want me to  
14 lie in swearing in?

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I don't--I'm sorry, I  
16 don't hear you.

17 MICHAEL BENJAMIN: If I raise my right  
18 hand I say something I don't really believe in,  
19 that's lying. I'm not going to do that. You're not a  
20 court of law.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, okay. So then  
22 would you affirm that what you're going to say is the  
23 truth?

24

25

1  
2 MICHAEL BENJAMIN: The very fact that I'm  
3 here proves I want to tell. I will give testimony,  
4 period.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So you're not going  
6 to affirm that what you're going to say is the truth?

7 MICHAEL BENJAMIN: I'm testifying without  
8 a court of law. The very fact that I'm offering  
9 testimony, because you are not a finder of fact. So  
10 there's no reason for me to be sworn in.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, so what we'll  
12 do is we'll start down here, and we will get over  
13 there, and I will make a decision. The rest of the  
14 people, would you please raise your right hand? Do  
15 you solemnly swear or affirm to tell the truth, the  
16 whole truth and nothing but the truth, and to answer  
17 Council Member questions honestly? Thank you. Mr.  
18 Varishka?

19 CHARLES VARISHKA: Yeah, I want to thank  
20 the Council for letting me speak today. I'm Charlie  
21 Varishka, and I want to say that I think that every  
22 child in this city should get the education that they  
23 need. If children need extra help, they should get  
24 that extra help. If children have special needs,  
25 those needs should be addressed, and if children are

1  
2 gifted, they have to be challenged. It's incumbent  
3 on us to make sure that every child in the city lives  
4 up to their God-given potential, and we need to do  
5 that by raising everybody up, not by pushing certain  
6 children down. This city has a long history of  
7 gifted education. We've seen children come from  
8 meager circumstances. We've seen children come from  
9 immigrants coming off the boat with nothing, come  
10 into tomorrow public schools children, public schools  
11 system, and based on their merit go on to achieve  
12 great things for themselves and for us. And this  
13 really fits in with what this city is about, because  
14 we're a beacon for people around the world who can  
15 come here and through hard work and exploitation of  
16 their talents can go on to achieve great things. They  
17 know that, and that's why they come here. And I  
18 would say that these principals are also consistent  
19 with American ideals with the American dream. And I  
20 know that these days those things are not looked upon  
21 highly, maybe, and maybe in some circles they're  
22 mocked, but I would ask this council to look past  
23 that cynicism and to vote no on the Resolution on the  
24 specialized high schools, because an objective, merit  
25 based system is the best thing for these children,

1  
2 and it's the best thing for our country and for this  
3 great city. Thank you.

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

6 DENNIS SAFFRAN: Good evening. My name  
7 is Dennis Saffran. I'm a lawyer and public policy  
8 writer whose written about the specialized high  
9 school test. A copy of my article about the test in  
10 the summer edition of City Journal is attached to my  
11 written testimony. I'd like to tell you a success  
12 story about diversity and progressive values. A  
13 racial minority group historically victimized by  
14 discrimination begins coming to America in greater  
15 numbers in the 1960's due to an immigration reform  
16 sponsored by Senator Edward Kennedy. Though many  
17 remain in poverty, they take advantage of several  
18 free, world class public high schools established by  
19 progressive New York City governments to provide  
20 smart, poor and working class kids with the kind of  
21 education that was once available only at Shote [sp?]  
22 and Andover. And by dint of hard work they totally  
23 best the dominant whites for admission to these  
24 schools. The group, of course, is Asian-Americans  
25 who now account for 60 percent of specialized school

1 students, and their story once would have been the  
2 stuff of liberal dreams. Now, it's the source of  
3 acute liberal discomfort since while their success at  
4 these schools has in fact come overwhelmingly at the  
5 expense of more affluent whites, it has also been  
6 accompanied by a troubling decrease in the small  
7 number of African-Americans and Latinos at the  
8 schools. But, and I can't stress this enough, the  
9 bill endorsed by Resolution 442 would do very little  
10 to increase black and Latino enrollment at these  
11 schools. I'm going to talk over this. Rather, it  
12 would primarily benefit the privileged children of  
13 the affluent white elite at the expense of poor and  
14 working class Asian immigrant kids. And that's  
15 backed up by both common sense and by the facts. The  
16 so-called holistic admissions standards favored by  
17 opponents of the test include such resume builders as  
18 extracurricular activities and community service.  
19 But as a parent leader pointedly noted, "The kids  
20 with the best resumes in eighth grade are the kids  
21 with money." The Chinese and Korean kids who have to  
22 help out at their parent's stores after school aren't  
23 going on the service trips to Nicaragua with the kids  
24 from the fashionable neighborhoods. The winners in  
25

1 this holistic system would be the children of  
2 privileged parents who can come the system by buying  
3 their kids the tokens of impressiveness. And this  
4 common sense logic is borne out by comparing the  
5 specialized schools as others have done throughout  
6 the day with the screened high schools which use  
7 these multiple admissions criteria. Yes, the  
8 screened schools are somewhat more black and Latino  
9 than the specialized schools. But they are also  
10 considerably whiter, considerably wealthier and  
11 substantially less Asian. While the black and  
12 Hispanic share of the population at the top screened  
13 schools is 14 percent higher than at the specialized  
14 schools, the white population is 22 percent higher.  
15 And the Asian population is an incredible 34 percent  
16 lower, 26 percent only compared to 60 percent.  
17 Somebody earlier from the NAACP spoke about a  
18 disparate impact. Let me tell you, 60 percent versus  
19 26 percent, that's a disparate impact, and it's the  
20 kind that civil rights lawyers sue about and courts  
21 award damages for. Moreover, as has been noted,  
22 there's also a striking class distinction between the  
23 specialized schools and the screened schools. The  
24 kids with the specialized schools are a lot poorer.  
25

1  
2 Fifty percent qualify for free or reduced price  
3 lunch, while on 36 percent of the kids at the top  
4 screened schools do. So this--

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Mr.  
6 Saffran, if you could just wrap up, I'd appreciate  
7 it.

8 DENNIS SAFFRAN: I am. I just got to it.  
9 This leaves me with two messages for the Council. For  
10 those of you who represent African-American and  
11 Latino constituencies, I ask you to please vote  
12 against this Resolution. The bill at facts will not  
13 substantially help your constituents, but will only  
14 pit them against them another disproportionately poor  
15 minority group while benefitting the most privileged  
16 children in the city. And for those who represent  
17 the affluent white areas in Queens and parts of  
18 Brooklyn, I have a more difficult message. This bill  
19 will benefit your constituents. I concede that. And  
20 so by one theory of what a representative should do,  
21 maybe--

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Mr.  
23 Saffran, if you could wrap up, please.

24 DENNIS SAFFRAN: you should support it.  
25 But if you do support this Resolution, don't style

1  
2 yourselves as champions of diversity and  
3 progressivism. Thank you.

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

6 PHIL GIMM: My name is Phil Gimm. I'm one  
7 of the Founders of Coalition EDU and an alumnus of  
8 Brooklyn Tech. I also ran for the Assembly in  
9 northern Queens this year. I have two concerns. One  
10 has to do with the impact of A9979 on Queens, and the  
11 other has to do with the representation of Asians in  
12 this issue. It is obvious that the intention of bill  
13 of A9979 and the proponents behind it are to evenly  
14 redistribute the seats at the specialized high  
15 schools. However, this will severely impact the  
16 Queens high school students and their families  
17 negatively. Queens sends the most students to  
18 specialized high school every year, with about 1,900  
19 students, which is 36 percent of all the specialized  
20 high school students. In fact, 60 percent of Bronx  
21 Science students come from our borough. The  
22 redistribution of specialized high school seats will  
23 reduce the number available for Queens's students and  
24 will send them back to the borough to look for seats.  
25 Queens, however, is uniquely short over 7,000 high



1 school seats. No other borough is like this, and it  
2 would devastate the already overcrowded high school  
3 situation in our borough. Queens should not be a  
4 dumping ground for education. Queens has another  
5 unique statistic, the most recent census in 2010  
6 indicated that 100,000 Asian immigrants move into our  
7 borough. Also, Asian-Americans have the highest rate  
8 of poverty among all minorities at 29 percent. The  
9 specialized high school reflect these statistics.  
10 About 60 to over 70 percent of the students are  
11 Asian-American depending on the school, and about 60  
12 percent are economically disadvantaged. The  
13 portrayal of Asian students at these schools as  
14 wealthy and privileged test preppers is absolutely  
15 inaccurate and is a stereotype. Certainly, when you  
16 have a discussion about diversity at these school,  
17 the Asian-American presence must be recognized. Yet,  
18 among dozens of articles that have been written over  
19 the past few months, many mention a lack of  
20 minorities at these schools. Writers and even  
21 politicians seem to ignore the fact that Asian-  
22 Americans are also a minority, and the word Asian is  
23 rarely mentioned. To the best of my knowledge, no  
24 Asian-American community based organizations were  
25

1  
2 approached when Resolution 442 was drafted. Asian-  
3 American immigrant families in New York have limited  
4 choices when it comes to education. Due to the  
5 language barrier--

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Sir,  
7 could you wrap up, please.

8 PHIL GIMM: due to the language barrier  
9 and familiarity with navigating the educational  
10 system to help hone in on specialized high school as  
11 their school of choice or high achievers. They see  
12 these schools as an opportunity for the children to  
13 get a head start--

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Sir,  
15 would you wrap up, please.

16 PHIL GIMM: toward success and achieve  
17 the American dream. 9979 have ramifications that  
18 will adversely affect New York City's Asian-Americans  
19 who already have their own socioeconomic problems.  
20 With limited representation in government,

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Sir,  
22 would you wrap up, please--

23 DENNIS GIMM: [interposing] Last sentence.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I'm going to have to  
25 cut your mic.

1  
2 DENNIS GIMM: Last sentence. Legislation  
3 need to thoroughly consider the impact of the--

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Cut the  
5 mic, please.

6 DENNIS GIMM: policy on the city's fastest  
7 growing minority.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Please cut the mic.  
9 Thank you. Next, please.

10 YING HE CHIN LI: My name is Ying He Chin  
11 Li, and I'm a junior in Stuyvesant High School. I  
12 oppose Resolution 442. I've read and heard what is  
13 said by those on the other side, and I feel that what  
14 they said is false, misleading or irrelevant. Most  
15 offensive to me is when they call us test robots. I  
16 find this racist. Just because I'm Asian, they judge  
17 me as having going to cram school since first grade  
18 and is good at nothing but taking tests. They don't  
19 know what they're talking about. I never went to cram  
20 school. I borrowed a practice test book from the  
21 public library, and I did practice tests, that's all.  
22 I am a person. I'm alive. I day dream and have  
23 hobbies. I crack jokes and do silly things with  
24 friends. Yet, those who call me test robot  
25 dehumanize me just because I am smart, just because I

1 worked hard in my K through eight education. Is this  
2 really what our education leaders want to do? At  
3 Stuyvesant, some of my friends did go to cram school,  
4 because their public schools didn't prepare them for  
5 a rigorous high school. Previous panelist complain  
6 that test cram resources were only available for the  
7 privileged, but some of my friend are poor. Cram  
8 school is not expensive. Some test prep is even  
9 free. Math and Science Institute offers free test  
10 prep, and Kahn Academy gives scholarships. Do our  
11 education leaders really want to scorn those who try  
12 to catch up weekends what they are not learning  
13 during the week from lousy K through eight public  
14 schools? When kids practice hard at basketball so  
15 they can play professionally, do they get racist  
16 epithets? No one thought Jeremy Lin got on the NBA  
17 because of race. It takes hard work plus talent to  
18 earn a place at the NBA. It takes hard work plus  
19 talent to earn a place at Stuyvesant. Neither are  
20 entitlements. Every one of us at Stuyvesant earned  
21 his place, just which one of us to give up its place  
22 for someone who did not work as hard or is less  
23 talented. I urge you to vote against Resolution 422.  
24 Thank you.  
25

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.  
3 Council Member Lander?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Ms. Chin Li,  
5 first I want to thank you for your testimony and for  
6 being here, and I entirely agree with you that the--  
7 to the extent that anyone walked away with a--and I  
8 don't think you heard it from any of us, the sense  
9 that that's how we think about you or your  
10 classmates. I, you know, I sincerely apologize. I  
11 don't think anything that we did indicated it in  
12 anyway, and I don't doubt for a second anything that  
13 you said about how hard you worked, about who you  
14 are, about what your dreams are, and I don't doubt it  
15 about any of your classmates, either. Whether they  
16 spent more or less time studying for the test, you're  
17 absolutely right that their hopes and dreams are the  
18 ones that we want to see flourish, and I really  
19 appreciate that you came down here and you stayed  
20 this late into the evening. I do disagree with you  
21 on the impact of the testing. I'd be glad to share  
22 some of the data that we have on what it does and  
23 what it achieves, and I do believe that Stuyvesant  
24 would be an even better school with a more diverse  
25 student population. I'd be thrilled to have that

1  
2 conversation another time, but I mostly just want to  
3 say thank you because to the extent that anybody  
4 things, and I will note to the prior testimony,  
5 Asian-American Legal Defense and Education Fund,  
6 Coalition of Asian-American Children and Families  
7 either came to or submitted testimony in support of  
8 this resolution, which is not to say that they're  
9 right and you're wrong, only to say that there are a  
10 diverse range of viewpoints amongst people of all  
11 races on this point of view. And you know, we can  
12 agree to disagree on this issue. I'm thrilled that  
13 you're a representative of New York and that you're  
14 working as hard as you are at Stuyvesant and that  
15 you came here to tell us what you think, and I  
16 respect that I won't change your mind, but I wanted  
17 to make sure that you know that I'm--that we're  
18 listening and that we heard you. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Same here.  
20 So, last but not least have you made a decision?

21 MICHAEL BENJAMIN: I'm sorry?

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Have you made a  
23 decision?

24

25

1  
2 MICHAEL BENJAMIN: I don't work for the  
3 City of New York, and power to swear us in is only  
4 regarding employees of the city who--

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Sir,  
6 when I have my committee--

7 MICHAEL BENJAMIN: Oversight, you have  
8 no--

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] I swear  
10 everybody in as I've done before.

11 MICHAEL BENJAMIN: You have no oversight  
12 over me. I'm allowed--

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Alright,  
14 what I've decided to do then is allow you--

15 MICHAEL BENJAMIN: [interposing] as a  
16 citizen I'm allowed to offer my testimony.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: What I've decided to  
18 then--

19 MICHAEL BENJAMIN: [interposing] I'm  
20 allowed to petition my government. If you insist on  
21 preventing--

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing]  
23 Sergeant--

24 MICHAEL BENJAMIN: a former state  
25 legislator who represented people as much as you do

1  
2 from stating his thoughts on this resolution, on  
3 these bills, you're acting improperly.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: The panel, thank you  
5 very much for coming, and I will--I'm sorry? You  
6 didn't have an opportunity yet? You didn't speak  
7 yet? Okay. So, yes, you may.

8 SYLVIA RAMOS: Hi, I submitted some  
9 written comments, so I'm not going to reiterate what  
10 a lot of people have said better here today. My name  
11 is Sylvia Ramos. I'm a parent with a child attending  
12 Stuyvesant High School. Thank you very much for  
13 hanging in there all day. I've been here since nine  
14 this morning, myself. I urge the City Council to  
15 support diversity, fairness and merit by supporting  
16 the SHSAT test for Stuyvesant High School, Brooklyn  
17 Tech, Bronx Science, and the other four specialized  
18 high schools by opposing Resolution 442. I want to  
19 share one story from my family, my husband who  
20 couldn't be here tonight. He grew up in Allerton  
21 Avenue in the Bronx. He attended PS 41. There was  
22 no gifted and talented program there. He was  
23 bullied. He became a discipline problem. Teachers,  
24 therefore, did not support him. They saw him as an  
25 issue. There was no test prep for the Hunter School



1  
2 to enter sixth grade, so although he took it, he did  
3 not pass. He went onto junior high school 113 where  
4 there was a lot of violence in the classroom. At  
5 this school, there was certainly no program to prep  
6 for the SHSAT. There was more bullying. They had no  
7 means. They were lower middle class. They had no  
8 means for private school. His mother's efforts  
9 helped get him transferred to JHS 135, which had a  
10 volunteer program to help students test prep for the  
11 SHSAT. Although he had no encouragement from a  
12 teacher, he attended this class. He went to the  
13 library. He checked out test prep materials from  
14 there and studied diligently for two years. He  
15 passed the SHSAT. He attended Bronx Science. He  
16 joined the debate. He improved some communications  
17 skills. He ended up applying and was accepted to  
18 Harvard. I speak out, again, please oppose 442.  
19 Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And thank you. And  
21 you caught me eating a chocolate.

22 MICHAEL BENJAMIN: Mr. Dromm, my name is  
23 Michael Benjamin. I'm a former state legislator.  
24 I'm a proud graduate of Bronx Science and a  
25

1  
2 recovering politician. But distinctly, I oppose  
3 resolution 442. The test itself is neither racist--

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Sir, as  
5 I told you, you cannot speak until I've sworn you in.

6 MICHAEL BENJAMIN: Sir, you are wrong.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, I'm going to  
8 have to ask you then to take--

9 MICHAEL BENJAMIN: [interposing] you have  
10 no jurisdiction over citizen--

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: a seat in the  
12 audience, and I what I will do--

13 MICHAEL BENJAMIN: petitioning their  
14 government.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: is I will allow you  
16 to speak--

17 MICHAEL BENJAMIN: If I were a member of  
18 the Department of Education, then--

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Sir, I  
20 will allow you to speak at the end of the ceremony--

21 MICHAEL BENJAMIN: But I am not--I am not  
22 a city employee, sir. I'm a resident citizen of New  
23 York City, and I'm allowed to petition my government  
24 to testify.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Officer, would you  
3 please address the issue. Thank you to the rest of  
4 the panel. Thank you for coming in.

5 MICHAEL BENJAMIN: Sir-- [off mic]

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I want to apologize  
7 to everybody for the interruption, but quite frankly,  
8 I've not had a situation like that before where  
9 anybody approaches the dais. Let's see if these  
10 people are remaining, Phillip Li or Lie? Adam  
11 Freilich, Ron Cau [sp?], Carla Bobinell [sp?], David  
12 Garcia Rosen? George Lee? George Lee still here? Oh,  
13 you testified, okay. Sorry. Robert Gezeldel [sp?],  
14 yep. Alright. Alright, would you please raise your  
15 right hand? Do you solemnly swear or affirm to tell  
16 the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth,  
17 and to answer Council Member questions honestly?  
18 Thank you. David, would you like to start?

19 DAVID GARCIA ROSEN: Sure. My name is  
20 David Garcia Rosen. I've worked for the New York  
21 City Department of Education for 16 years as a  
22 teacher, dean, SSAL, founder, coach, and student  
23 advocate. Not only are New York City high schools  
24 separate, but they are also unequal. One stark  
25 example of this is the public school's athletic

1 league, which continues to be one of the most  
2 separate and unequal sports leagues in the country.  
3 I've entered into evidence here a copy of the civil  
4 rights complaint I filed with the Office of Civil  
5 Rights of the United States Department of Education.  
6 Through a detailed analysis of data publicly  
7 available on DOE websites, it paints an infuriating  
8 picture of a tale of two cities. In one city, you  
9 have the 68,708 high school students that attend a  
10 school with a diverse student body. These schools  
11 have anywhere from 21 to 82 percent white students  
12 and incredible access to the public school's athletic  
13 league. The average number of teams at these schools  
14 is 18 with 15 percent of the students attending a  
15 school with more than 40 teams funded by the  
16 Department of Education. Fifty percent of these  
17 students attend a school with more than 30 teams, and  
18 70 percent attend a school with more than 20 teams. In  
19 the other city, you have the 72,000 students who  
20 attend a high school with 99 to 100 percent students  
21 of color. My high school, International Community  
22 High School in the Monthaven section of the Bronx is  
23 one of these schools. In the segregated part of the  
24 high school system, the average number of PSAL teams  
25

1 is seven compared to 18 at the most diverse schools.  
2 Not one of these students attend a high school with  
3 access to more than 30 teams compared to 50 percent  
4 at the schools with most white students. Twelve  
5 percent of these students attend a high school with  
6 more than 20 teams compared to 70 percent at the high  
7 schools with the most white students. Six thousand  
8 of these students of color attend a high school with  
9 no PSAL sports at all. The DOE is denying my students  
10 the opportunity to transform their lives through the  
11 power of sports while distributing disproportionate  
12 amounts of sports funding to our whitest high schools  
13 behind closed doors in a system filled with cronyism  
14 and maleficence. The United States Department of  
15 Education's Office of Civil Rights has made it clear,  
16 there is no excuse for violating Title Six of the  
17 Civil Rights Act of 1964. They have made it clear  
18 that you cannot use the excuse, lack of fields, lack  
19 of funds to deny students of color equal access to  
20 the diverse range of PSAL sports. As the former  
21 Director of the Small Schools Athletic League, I can  
22 tell you we have enough funds and we have enough  
23 fields to bring equal access to all students. What  
24 we don't have is leadership at the PSAL and the DOE  
25

1  
2 that has a vision and desire to make sure every  
3 student in New York City has access to high school  
4 sports. In a month that we have been chanting "Black  
5 lives matter," We should also be in front of Tweed  
6 [sic] telling the DOE, "Black students matter."  
7 Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much,  
9 David. Next, please.

10 RON CAU: Hi, my name is Ran Cau [sp?], a  
11 former Stuyvesant [sic]. I'm here to read a  
12 statement of a current Stuy parent Sonja Pablovich  
13 [sp?]. Here is here statement. "My name is Sonjau  
14 Pablovich. I am the parent of the senior at Stuy  
15 High School. I'm here to oppose Resolution 442,  
16 which is the state legislation to pass and the  
17 Governor to sign S7738 A9979, changing the admission  
18 criteria for New York City specialized high school.  
19 Resolution 442 [inaudible 08:57:42] on the premise  
20 mainly that is a current identity and the [inaudible  
21 08:57:49] is failure to admission that serves to  
22 exclude a student [inaudible 08:57:55] strive at the  
23 specialized high school and the limited [sic]  
24 opportunity as result. That is the same a primary  
25 admission hurdle and let me tell you the reason why.

1  
2 First, the SHSAT recognize [sic] the grammatical  
3 [sic] choice test that would be most of the entirety  
4 of what our student are doing in high school. A  
5 student who doesn't naturally demonstrate a mastery  
6 of academic content in your high pressure multiple  
7 choice test will find four years of hell waiting.  
8 Secondly, spending. School based expectation of the  
9 parts for most of the year are right up on the DOE  
10 website 2011 to 12 for the strict [sic] high school  
11 average of per capita spending per student in the  
12 17,722 dollars. Average spending per student at  
13 Stuyvesant is 13,341 dollars. In fact, there is only  
14 one high school [inaudible 08:59:02] per student.  
15 Watching or reading high school [inaudible 08:59:09]  
16 a night school where the [inaudible 08:59:12] is  
17 spent. Third, the opportunities are relevant [sic]  
18 to student based on family resources. There is a  
19 clear divide at Stuyvesant. Forty-seven percent get  
20 a free lunch. Some adversely [sic] [inaudible] that  
21 half of the student body that is living near or on  
22 the property line. Fourth, teachers. The students  
23 take a test to get in, not the teacher. Stuyvesant  
24 teacher are representative of New York City high  
25 school teachers as a whole. Some are stellar, others

1  
2 indifferent or feel codified. Please, the proposed  
3 changing the admission framework do not address the  
4 problem of racial diversity directly. Thank you.”

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.  
6 Next, please.

7 ADAM FREILICH: Good evening. My room is  
8 Adam Freilich and I'm a Bronx Science Alumnus of the  
9 class of 2013. We've come to a crossroads in today's  
10 culture where race is once again surfaced on the  
11 forefront of our media, our justice system and now  
12 our education. The statistics are irrefutable and  
13 there's an alarmingly small percentage of black and  
14 Hispanic students in our most elite secondary  
15 educational institutions, and this number only  
16 becomes more jarring when compared to our fine city's  
17 demographic complexion. However, our city's  
18 diversity is precisely the reason that we must not  
19 reform the admissions process for specialized high  
20 schools. Today, I will address why the proposed  
21 reform does not create new roads to success and how  
22 this shift in focus entrenches the system of  
23 discrimination. I stand here today this day in  
24 speaking with the hopes of bringing forth a future  
25 which looks to be void of privilege and thrives in



1  
2 equality. The next paragraph in the written  
3 statement addresses issues of poverty which most  
4 people have rehashed, so I'm going to brush over it  
5 in the interest of time. But eliminating a Singular  
6 test in favor of a system that mirrors our college  
7 admissions process seems to me a regressive step for  
8 inclusivity. In light of the recent Supreme Court  
9 decision in Shutt [sp?] the Coalition to defend  
10 affirmative action, many news outlets published  
11 updated data on racial enrollment and achievement  
12 disparities at the collegiate level. We've done a  
13 great deal to address our racial admissions gap as.  
14 Of 2011, black enrollment trails white enrollment by  
15 only five percent at the collegiate level.  
16 Unfortunately, enrollment does not necessitate the  
17 same academic success. The current population survey  
18 notes that graduation rates have become stagnant with  
19 40 percent of white students obtaining a bachelor's  
20 degree on time, while only 20 percent of black and 15  
21 percent Hispanic students can boast the same merit.  
22 So my question then becomes why should we invite this  
23 same disparity between enrollment and success at the  
24 high school level. Ms. Schnieder and Ms. Alfonso,  
25 and especially Mr. Roberts all testified to some

1 degree of this same thought. Why should we--what  
2 would admissions do if they're not equipped to  
3 succeed in the system that we're placing them in?  
4 Ultimately, the logical solution then just becomes  
5 reform as a solution. We turn our cheek and side  
6 step the neighborhoods in districts that truly need  
7 our assistance. If you really want to level the  
8 playing field, you should do so long before the high  
9 school level. The New York Times reports that  
10 disadvantaged gain the most from preschool level  
11 education seeing that they fall behind at a young  
12 age. They have no means to catch up. Julia Isaacs  
13 of the Brookings Institute notes that preschools  
14 offer most promise for fixing this gap, making  
15 children nine percent more likely to be school ready  
16 by kindergarten age. To ignore schools in need is to  
17 deny progress and to eliminate this test is to say we  
18 are content with how this system stands, ignoring  
19 those in need. Thank you.

20  
21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.  
22 Next, please?

23 KAREN BARBINELL: Hi, my name is Karen  
24 Barbinell [sp?]. I'm the parent of a current  
25 Stuyvesant student. I'm going to skip right on, so

1 this might be a little less. So, 60 years ago,  
2 Stuyvesant was too Jewish. Now, it's too Asian, a  
3 code word for Chinese. So many of the "Asian kids"  
4 at the specialized school are from so many places,  
5 speak so many languages, not just Mandarin or  
6 Cantonese, not just Korean, Pushtu [sp?] or Russian.  
7 There are so many subsets within the populations of  
8 specialized schools. These kids are from the poorest  
9 countries, the Indian subcontinent, and many are  
10 mixed race. They have a lot to put up with at home  
11 as well at school. So it's not just poverty, it's  
12 not. The test hasn't changed much. The process not  
13 at all. Why are the results so different? There are  
14 assumptions that kids who are successful students  
15 were pushed, prodded and prepped, and these derive  
16 the efforts of these children have made on their own  
17 in the sheer doggedness so many of these children  
18 demonstrated to attain a spot at these schools. Many  
19 students are really angered by the proposed change to  
20 the SHSAT. Individual examples don't translate to  
21 statistical majorities, but one family's child is  
22 emblematic. His parents did not want him to go to  
23 Stuyvesant. They would not pay for prep work. They  
24 specifically worked against this dream. This child  
25

1  
2 studied on his own, signed up for the test on his  
3 own. I'm not going to say how we got a parent  
4 signature there, because that might get the kid in  
5 trouble. Nevertheless, he did well. His essay would  
6 have been as heart stringing as anybody's, but he  
7 didn't have that. He had the drive. He's at  
8 Stuyvesant. His mother, frankly, I think would  
9 rather he was working in the restaurant. Here's the  
10 other thing, and this is from my heart about my own  
11 son. So, most of the kids whose tiny and mixed race.  
12 He can't get a cab in New York City. So most of the  
13 kids at the specialized high schools came from  
14 neighborhood grammar and middle schools. Often,  
15 these kids were teased and bullied for being lost in  
16 books, wanting to spend their time building computers  
17 along with playing video games, and generally being  
18 interested in different things. The bullying started  
19 young. Why? It bears repeating. These children have  
20 a different definition of play. Their favorite toys  
21 were often books. Their drive is often more  
22 academic. So there are all these things. I know that  
23 time is limited, but I want to say last is you're  
24 setting up kids to fail. In these schools, a kid is  
25 really challenged that has done well but is at the

1  
2 edge of his or her abilities. Put that kid in a  
3 place where they start unprepared at day one, expect  
4 that kid to not only make up the knowledge they don't  
5 yet have, which you said you can't do, but learn new  
6 material at a blistering pace that builds on top of  
7 the information they're just being taught. How can  
8 you do that to a child? It's cruel. They need to  
9 prepared when they're little, and if not, oh my  
10 goodness, what you're doing to them breaks my heart,  
11 because then they're going to think they can't  
12 succeed in college. Don't do this to these children.  
13 Let the test stand and give these kids the help they  
14 need. Just so you know, I teach at PS 304 in Bed-  
15 Stuy.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you.  
17 Next, please.

18 ROBERT GEZELTER: I'm Robert Gezelter.  
19 I'm a 1977 alum at Bronx Science, and I'm a--I went  
20 to school, to college at NYU for a Bachelors, a  
21 Masters, and most of a PHD in Computer Science. I am  
22 against Resolution 442. Why? The goal is laudable.  
23 There are more black and Latino students at the  
24 school when I was there in the graduating of '77, but  
25 jiggling the admissions process and making it

1 nonobjective is not going to fix the problem. It's  
2 just going to create a lot of problems for the school  
3 and for the students. The exam doesn't discriminate.  
4 The differential outcomes appear to be more  
5 correlated with the differential qualities of the  
6 underlying K to eight experience. The exam is  
7 therefore is race, gender, orientation, religion  
8 blind. If you pass the test, you pass the test.  
9 When I was there, that was a binding factor.  
10 Everybody knew there was no games involved in getting  
11 into the school. You pass the test. What you do  
12 from there is what you do from there. The decision  
13 to go to a top three school mainly Stuyvesant, Tech  
14 or Science is a very strong commitment. You're going  
15 to spend, and I did spend, an hour and a half each  
16 way to an hour and 45 each way getting there and  
17 back. My school day started at eight in the morning  
18 and ran 'til four in the afternoon, and then I had  
19 homework. That's a much higher and much more intense  
20 course load than any other school in the system,  
21 except perhaps Julliard or one of the other  
22 performing schools. That's not an easy commitment.  
23 It's not something that somebody can make up on  
24 shortcomings. It was noted earlier that you start  
25

1  
2 doing the equivalent of college work on the first or  
3 second day. If you come in behind the curve, you  
4 aren't going to make it up. All you are doing is the  
5 predecessor noted, is setting somebody up to fail,  
6 which is destructive to him or her and it doesn't  
7 help the school either. And that's--I'm going to  
8 stay on time and basically conclude with that fact.  
9 Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. So I'm going to  
11 say thank you to all of you as well, and I appreciate  
12 it. It's getting very, very late now, and I'm going  
13 to call the next panel. Laura Hamilton? Jurie  
14 O'berg Harrell [sp?], I believe? Is Jurie here? I  
15 guess not. And Karen Barbinell? Oh, I'm sorry.  
16 Okay. You filled out two slips? Okay.

17 LAURA HAMILTON: Do I get to speak by  
18 myself?

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Are you the last one?

20 LAURA HAMILTON: Yeah. Save the best for  
21 last.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Wow, save the best  
23 for last, and one--and all alone, too.

24

25

1  
2 LAURA HAMILTON: Alright. I like this.  
3 I'm a Leo, I have to tell you. Okay. Good evening.  
4 My name is Laura--

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Hold on  
6 one minute, Laura, because I do have to swear you in,  
7 and then there may be one other--this young student  
8 here, he filled out a slip.

9 LAURA HAMILTON: Oh, go ahead. I have to  
10 share the spotlight. Get out.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And he did a video  
12 also, if I'm not--

13 LAURA HAMILTON: [interposing] No, way.  
14 He's an overachiever.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: We haven't heard  
17 from any of those today.

18 LAURA HAMILTON: Not one.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Alright. I'm going  
20 to ask you to please raise your right hand. And do  
21 you solemnly swear or affirm to tell the truth, the  
22 whole truth and nothing but the truth, and to answer  
23 Council Member questions honestly?

24 LAURA HAMILTON: I do.

25 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.



1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

LAURA HAMILTON: Okay. Should I start?

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes, please.

LAURA HAMILTON: Good evening. My name is Laura Hamilton, and I am a parent of two children in New York City. I am opposed to changing the admission process to the specialized high schools because I feel it is premature to do so. Please vote no to Resolution 442. In 2013, over 69,000 eighth grade students took the math state test in New York City. Approximately 28,000 students took the specialized high school exam. Why did 40,000 students not take the test? If we are committed to diversity, then a blind test is the answer. However, many students do not have access to the test. Why? I can tell you that many students did not receive those post cards that the DOE representatives discussed earlier today. If the test was mandatory, we could truly understand what is happening our school system. Multiple measures are often arbitrary. Grades from one school to another are not uniform. As councilperson Williams explained, the screened schools which use multiple measures are even less diverse than the specialized high schools. For now, a blind test is the only way to eventually reach

1  
2 the level of diversity that we are striving for. If  
3 all eighth graders were mandated to take the  
4 specialized high school standardized test, all middle  
5 school would have to work towards elevating their  
6 curricula and preparing their students. The only way  
7 to make the specialized high schools more diverse is  
8 to mandate the test for all eighth graders. Thank  
9 you.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.  
11 Short and sweet.

12 LAURA HAMILTON: Thank you. I am short  
13 and sweet. I'm five feet.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [inaudible] testimony  
15 very much. Thank you.

16 ARA AREM: Hello, my name Ara Arem [sp?],  
17 and I'm an alumnus of the High School of American  
18 Studies at Lehman College, also known as HSAS. I'm  
19 one of the eight specialized high schools that use  
20 the SHSAT as the sole factor in determining  
21 admissions. When I applied to HSAS in 2010, the  
22 school was 44 percent black and Latino, about as  
23 racially diverse as the city it serves. But by the  
24 time I graduated, the freshman class was  
25 substantially lower, 14 percent black and Latino. I

1  
2 witnessed essentially the gradual segregation of my  
3 school. Having seen this trend play out, I set out  
4 to better understand the high school selective  
5 admission policies. During my senior year I devoted  
6 a large amount of time to a documentary film project  
7 that explored efforts to reform the admission system  
8 for specialized schools. This film, entitled Reform  
9 the Admissions, is now available on YouTube. Each  
10 week I spend several hours discussing the  
11 complexities of reforming the admissions systems with  
12 my teachers and listen to student's experiences and  
13 challenges with issues pertaining to diversity in an  
14 increasingly homogenous social environment. I also  
15 distributed surveys to SHAS teachers and students  
16 attempting to analyze several topics of interest  
17 relating to demographic change and efforts to promote  
18 diversity within the specialized high schools. I  
19 want to take this opportunity to share some of the  
20 findings from these surveys. First, my findings  
21 demonstrated a direct correlation between the decline  
22 in racial diversity and the decline in socioeconomic  
23 diversity at my school. For example, the class of  
24 2014, 29 percent of students identified as black and  
25 Latino, and 29 percent identified as working or lower

1 middle class. In the class of 2017, 14 percent of  
2 students identified as black and Latino and 15  
3 percent identified as working or lower middle class.  
4 My findings also revealed the significant disparity  
5 in the methods by which students of different racial  
6 backgrounds prepared for the SHSAT. While 77 percent  
7 of white students at HSAS paid for test prep, only 18  
8 percent of the black and Latino students did. I also  
9 found that teachers at my school were overwhelmingly  
10 supportive of efforts to change the admissions  
11 process at specialized schools. Eighty-two percent  
12 of HSAS agreed that the specialized high school's  
13 admission system should be reformed. The majority of  
14 teachers also supported pre-registering all eighth  
15 graders to take the SHSAT, expanding the Discovery  
16 Program, offering seats to middle school  
17 valedictorians, and several other reforms. While the  
18 purpose of my project was not to advocate particular  
19 policies, so much as to support a constructive  
20 dialogue on reform. I'd like to this opportunity to  
21 draw attention to two fairly commonsensical reforms  
22 that have not garnered significant attention in the  
23 public discourse. One of these we have discussed a  
24 little bit today, and that's pre-registering all  
25

1  
2 eighth graders from New York public schools to take  
3 the SHSAT. This is the very least we can do. But  
4 additionally, I believe we should give more  
5 consideration to the possibility of admitting  
6 valedictorians of public middle schools to  
7 specialized high school. This would be a guaranteed  
8 way to increase diversity, and it would value  
9 perseverance in the academic setting as well as  
10 performance in high stakes examinations. And by no  
11 means, the first one to support this policy. The UFT  
12 taskforce originally suggested this reform. It's  
13 unclear to me why there's been so little discussion  
14 of this possibility today. I'd like to also ask  
15 permission to present my film as testimony to the  
16 council.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Sure we would love to  
18 have that. I don't think we have the ability to be  
19 able to show it right now.

20 ARA AREM: Yeah.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Obviously, but I will  
22 definitely look at it. Is that the end of your  
23 testimony?

24 ARA AREM: Yeah.

25

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, I just want to  
3 say thank you and I'm sorry that we somehow misplaced  
4 your slip. I know that you've been waiting here. You  
5 approached me even before. You've been through here.  
6 You sat through the whole hearing, and that shows  
7 really great dedication, and I'm very grateful that  
8 you did that, and I thank you very much for your  
9 testimony and for your suggestions. You are making  
10 the suggestion that we take the valedictorian from  
11 each school and test them? Is that what your  
12 recommendation was, the second recommendation?

13 ARA AREM: The idea would be to grant a  
14 spot a specialized high school for every  
15 valedictorian of public middle school.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: In every--from ever  
17 middle school.

18 ARA AREM: Yeah, this would account for  
19 one-sixth of the seats for specialized high schools,  
20 not factoring the students who already would be  
21 placed into specialized high schools based on the  
22 SHSAT. So it really would come down to around 10  
23 percent.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And that would be  
25 after having them taken the test as well?

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

ARA AREM: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah. Okay, alright.

I just wanted to be clear on it. Thank you. Council Member Lander has a question.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Well, first I do want to thank you guys, I mean, everyone who's still here. I want to thank you for your patience and you stuck around. We do appreciate it, and especially to the two of you for closing it out. And I do want to say to you, you know, we've heard from a lot of people who are a great testament to all the specialized high schools and many of the other New York City public schools as well, you know, and who take these questions seriously, try to bring analytic and research and creative approaches to them. So, thank you. I'm going to tweet out your film, as I've been live tweeting a lot of the hearing, but I think, you know, it's this sort of approach and thinking that we need. The model that you're proposing, although it would only select the valedictorians, in many ways similar to essentially sort of what I think of as the Texas model, which takes the top 10 percent in--University of Texas takes the top 10 percent of

1  
2 all high school students in Texas, and guarantees  
3 them a slot in the UT system essentially.

4 ARA AREM: yeah, it'd be similar to that  
5 in a way.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: So, it's one that  
7 we, you're right, we didn't talk about today, and you  
8 know, I was hoping we'd get a little more diversity  
9 of thinking about models and approaches. We had some  
10 of that earlier as supposed to just quite so polarize  
11 set of testimony, but I look forward to watching the  
12 film, and I appreciate having your contact  
13 information in case we have any more questions about  
14 it.

15 ARA AREM: Yeah, thank you.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Let me  
18 excuse the panel. Thank you for coming in and for  
19 waiting so long today to give your testimony. And so  
20 I don't think there's anybody else that wants to  
21 testify. Am I right? Okay, after nine hours, excuse  
22 me, nine hours and 45 minutes this meeting is  
23 adjourned at 8:45 p.m. in the evening. Thank you.

24 [gavel]



C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date December 23, 2014