

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Jointly with

COMMITTEE ON CIVIL &  
HUMAN RIGHTS

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June 18, 2025  
Start: 1:25 p.m.  
Recess: 6:25 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Rita C. Joseph  
Chairperson

Nantasha N. Williams  
Chairperson

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Rafael Salamanca, Jr.  
Kevin C. Riley

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

Melissa Aviles-Ramos  
Chancellor of NYC Public Schools

Daniel Weisberg  
First Deputy Chancellor of NYC Public Schools

Trevonda Kelly  
Chief Enrollment Officer at NYC Public Schools

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Chief of Office of Multilingual Learners at NYC  
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## A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Mark Rampersant  
Chief of Safety and Prevention Partnership at NYC  
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Jania Witherspoon  
Circle Keepers

Lara Lai  
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Nyah Berg  
New York Appleseed

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

Matt Gonzales  
New Yorkers for Racially Just Public Schools

Matt Chacko  
Student Leadership Network

Rochelle Du  
Integration Coalition

Randi Levine  
Advocates for Children

Antonia L'Abbate  
Equal First Aid

Heidi Felix  
Life Vac

Antonia Ferraro Martinelli

Eric Ryan  
Equal First Aid

Christopher Leon Johnson

Kimberly Chambers  
Maverick's Legacy

Darrin Chambers  
Maverick's Legacy

Jennifer Glenn

Raymond Priebe

Halley Potter  
Century Foundation

Allen Liu  
NAACP Legal Defense Fund

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

Limarys Caraballo  
Latinidad Curriculum Initiative

Phil Heimlich

Gisela Rosa  
Brotherhood Sister Soul

John Carpenter

Regina Cortina

Vivian Fitzgerald



2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good afternoon and  
3 welcome to today's New York City Council hearing for  
4 the Committee on Education joint with the Committee  
5 on Civil and Human Rights. Please silence all cell  
6 phones and electronic devices, and do not approach  
7 the dais. If you wish to submit testimony, you may  
8 do so by signing up in the front with the Sergeant at  
9 Arms and yes, just a friendly reminder again, do not  
10 approach the dais. Chairs, we're ready to begin.

11 [gavel]

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Good afternoon and  
13 welcome to today's oversight hearing on advancing  
14 diversity and equity in New York City Public Schools.  
15 I'm Council Member Rita Joseph, Chair on the  
16 Committee on Education, and we are joined by  
17 Committee on Civil and Human Rights, it's Chair Dr.  
18 Nantasha Williams. Thank you to everyone who has  
19 signed up to testify. We look forward to hearing  
20 your testimony. Today, the Committee will consider  
21 the following legislation: Intro 142, sponsored by  
22 Council Member Selvena Brooks-Powers, requiring  
23 biannual studies on students' access to internet and  
24 electronic devices; Intro 955, sponsored by Council  
25 Member Kevin Riley, mandating annual reports on

2 afterschool programs; Intro 1002, sponsored by  
3 Council Member Kristy Marmorato, requiring schools to  
4 stock airway clearance devices; Resolution 718,  
5 sponsored by myself, calling for all health education  
6 in elementary schools; and Reso 929, sponsored by  
7 Council Member Gale Brewer, supporting the Protect  
8 Our School Act in relation to protecting students,  
9 faculty and staff from civil arrests while attending  
10 or participating in school activities. In 1954, the  
11 Supreme Court issued its unanimous decision in Brown  
12 versus Board of Education, declaring that racial  
13 segregation in public schools was unconstitutional.  
14 More than 70 years later, the intent of Brown remains  
15 unmet, especially here in New York City. New York  
16 City Department of Education serves 912,000 students.  
17 The student's population is diverse: 42 are Hispanic,  
18 20 percent Black, 19 percent Asian, and 16 percent  
19 White. Nearly three-quarters economically  
20 disadvantaged. Yet, segregation at our schools  
21 remain deeply entrenched. In 2014, New York City  
22 Public Schools have been ranked the most segregated  
23 in the country for Black student and the second-  
24 largest segregated for Latinx students; 85 percent of  
25 our Black students, 75 percent of our Latinx students



2 intensely segregated schools. Meanwhile, only 14  
3 percent of Black students, 18 percent of Latinx  
4 students attend opportunity high schools, compared to  
5 43 percent of White and Asian students. Even in  
6 District Three, one of Manhattan's most  
7 demographically diverse areas, we see segregation  
8 persists. One of the 16 schools with 35 percent or  
9 more Black students, the average White enrollment is  
10 just four percent. This segregation affects  
11 outcomes. In 2024, Black fourth grade students  
12 scored 31 points lower in reading than their White  
13 peers. Latinx students scored 38 points lower.  
14 Students from low-income households scored nearly 30  
15 points below their wealthier classmates, and this is  
16 despite the fact that New York City spends an average  
17 of \$31,717 per student, nearly double the national  
18 average. In 2017, New York City Public Schools  
19 launched a diversity plan aimed at reducing school  
20 segregation. It set goals to increase numbers of  
21 racially-represented schools by 50,000 student,  
22 reduce economically stratified school by 10 percent  
23 and expand inclusive practices for English language  
24 learners, students with disabilities. It included 12  
25 policy proposals and created the School Diversity

2 Advisory Group to provide citywide recommendations.

3 Programs like Diversity in Admissions have expanded  
4 from seven schools in 2016 to over 100 today.

5 Prioritizing students who are low-income, English  
6 language learners, and student in temporary housing.

7 Yet, participation remained voluntary and impact has  
8 been limited in scale. Admission policies include

9 academic screening in gifted and talented program

10 access-- continued to reinforce disparities. The

11 pandemic briefly interrupted these systems leading to

12 more equitable enrollment, but screens were

13 reinstated in 2022. Now, based on fourth grade

14 course grades, as of this year, 69 middle schools

15 have returned to using academic screens. School

16 choice and zoning policies also play a role. While

17 families can technically apply citywide, in practice,

18 language access issues, digital barriers, and complex

19 application systems create real obstacles especially

20 for immigrant and low-income families. In 2019, the

21 Council passed Local Law 225 requiring every

22 community school district to develop a diversity plan

23 through the establishment of district diversity

24 working groups. Five years later, New York City

25 Public Schools has yet to fully implement the

2 requirements citywide. Only a few districts have  
3 published plans . I am concerned by the lack of  
4 transparency and accountability. Research has shown  
5 that integrated schools produce stronger academic  
6 outcomes, increased civic engagement and improve  
7 graduation rates, but progress requires more than  
8 good intentions. It requires structure, urgency, and  
9 sustained action. Today, we will hear from New York  
10 City public schools, students, families, educators,  
11 advocates, and we will ask what are doing, not in  
12 theory, but in practice to create a public school  
13 system that truly reflects the diversity of our city  
14 and its values, and we will talk about advancing  
15 equity in our schools. We must also confront the  
16 disparities that exist in access to basic preventive  
17 care. This is why I'm proud to sponsor Reso 718.  
18 Equity includes the right to learn without avoidable  
19 pain or shame. Thank you to the members of the  
20 Education Committee who have joined us today,  
21 Council Member Williams, Louis, Marmorato, Hudson,  
22 Brewer, and Narcisse. I would also like to thank  
23 Committee staff Nadia Jean-Francois [sp?], Chloe  
24 Rivera [sp?], Angeline Lawless [sp?], Grace Amato  
25 [sp?], Rose Martinez, Erik Brown, Anne Driscoll, as  
well as my

2 own staff, Juvanie Piquant [sp?], and Joel Desouve  
3 [sp?] for their work today. I will now turn to my  
4 co-Chair, Dr. Nantasha Williams, for her opening  
5 statement.

6 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you. Good  
7 afternoon. My name is Nantasha Williams and I serve  
8 as the Chair to the Committee on Civil and Human  
9 Rights. Thank you to everyone joining us for today's  
10 joint hearing with the Commission on Education, and  
11 of course, a big thank you to my Co-Chair Council  
12 Member Joseph for working with me to address this  
13 topic. I'd like to start off by wishing everyone a  
14 happy Juneteenth tomorrow. Yes. I'm greatly honored  
15 to be in a position to help facilitate such important  
16 conversations on the eve on such an important day.  
17 New York City did not gain its reputation as the  
18 melting pot of the United States by accident. Our  
19 city's identity is largely built on its role as a  
20 haven of opportunity for the people who come from all  
21 over the world to build a better life, a fundamental  
22 aspect of which is access to quality education.  
23 There are currently over 900,000 students enrolled in  
24 the City's public school system. These are the  
25 student who will grow up to be the future of our city

2 and our country. A driving force behind what makes  
3 this city great is the effort, attention and  
4 dedication of our parents and our educators who work  
5 tirelessly every day to foster and shape the next  
6 generation of New Yorkers. Racial and income  
7 disparities have persisted as obstacles in academic  
8 achievement for far too long. As Chair Joseph  
9 pointed out in her opening statement, the vast  
10 majority of Black and Hispanic students attend  
11 segregated schools, yet even in instances where Black  
12 and Hispanic students attend "high opportunity"  
13 schools, they are less likely to enroll in advanced  
14 coursework compared to their White and Asian peers.  
15 While policymakers are committed to ensuring that New  
16 York City Public Schools has the resources to tackle  
17 these persistent problems, a commitment that is  
18 constantly and consistently reflected in the budget,  
19 New York City Public Schools remains among the most  
20 segregated in the nation. During today's hearing I'm  
21 hoping to learn more about the work that the  
22 Department has done to ensure that all children have  
23 equitable access to the educational resources and  
24 tools that will set them up for success, both within  
25 our school system and beyond. I also welcome what I

2 hope will be constructive conversation surrounding  
3 the bills and resolutions being heard today. Thank  
4 you to committee staff and the data team for their  
5 work on this hearing, and thank you to my colleagues  
6 who have also joined us today. I look forward to  
7 hearing everyone's testimony.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Chair  
9 Williams. I would also like to recognize Council  
10 Member Krishnan, Council Member Lee, and Council  
11 Member Brooks-Powers. I now thank you, Chair  
12 Williams. Before we swear in the administration, we  
13 will also hear remarks from Council Member Brooks-  
14 Powers.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you,  
16 Chairs, and thank you to my colleagues who have  
17 joined us for this important conversation. I'm proud  
18 to sponsor Intro 142 which would require the  
19 Department of Education to conduct a biannual study  
20 on student access to home internet and devices. This  
21 is a matter of educational equity, and we can't close  
22 the achievement gap without first closing digital  
23 divide. We saw during the pandemic just how deeply  
24 this issue affects students in communities like mine.  
25 I represent parts of southeast Queens where too many

2 households still struggle with reliable broadband or  
3 lack the necessary devices for their children to  
4 fully participate in school, especially in multi-  
5 child homes. If a student doesn't have access to the  
6 internet, they're not just missing homework. They're  
7 missing tutoring, research, test prep, and college  
8 applications. They're missing the foundations for  
9 long-term success. As Chair of the Committee on  
10 Transportation and Infrastructure, I often focus on  
11 how we move New Yorkers safer and efficiently, but  
12 digital infrastructure is just as essential in  
13 today's world. It's a matter of access. It's a  
14 matter of opportunity, and it's a matter of fairness.  
15 This bill is simple. It ensures that we're not  
16 guessing. We're gathering real data to understand  
17 where gaps persist, and it requires DOE to propose  
18 meaningful solutions, not just document the problem.  
19 I urge the Department to support this legislation,  
20 and I thank the Chairs for holding today's hearing.  
21 Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council  
23 Member. Now, I'd like to turn to Council Member  
24 Brewer.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very  
3 much. I am discussing Intro 929. It's called the  
4 Protect Our Schools Act, and in today's world,  
5 unfortunately we have to think about these issues.  
6 It would protect and ensure that students, faculty  
7 and staff are protected from civil immigration  
8 arrests while attending schools or participating in  
9 school-related activities, and it would establish  
10 clear guidelines on law enforcement access to school  
11 property. I want to thank the Chancellor because she  
12 has been at every rally discussing this topic,  
13 supportive of the students and faculty and parents.  
14 And I haven't heard about ICE showing up at a school  
15 so far, but I know one school particular--we're all  
16 very accustomed and nervous when we see people in  
17 unmarked cars looking like they are from ICE. We  
18 don't know, but we did see some outside of a school  
19 recently, not in a school. Anything is possible in  
20 this environment. The Federal Government is making  
21 arrests inside Immigration Courts for no apparent  
22 reason, as we saw more dramatically that ever  
23 yesterday. The Protect Our Schools Act did not pass  
24 either house in Washington. It is important  
25 legislation giving escalating threats out of



2 Washington D.C. and our Federal Government. A  
3 similar bill did pass, the Protect Our Courts Act,  
4 which prohibits immigration-related arrests inside a  
5 New York State courthouse. The Department of Justice  
6 probably sued to block it. Thank you very much.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council  
8 Member Brewer. Council Member Marmorato?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Thank you,  
10 Chair Joseph and members of the Committee and to all  
11 those that are here to offer testimony. Thank you for  
12 your time and attention on this legislation. Intro  
13 1002, a Local Law to require all schools to stock  
14 airway clearance devices is rooted in a fundamental  
15 responsibility, protecting the lives of our children.  
16 This effort is deeply personal. I had lost my  
17 grandfather due to a choking incident that could not  
18 be reversed in time, and it happened fast. The sad  
19 part is knowing that if a simple tool was made  
20 available, it may have saved his life. That  
21 experience showed me how critical it is to have more  
22 than one way to respond to an emergency. This  
23 legislation does not replace CPR or the Heimlich  
24 maneuver. They're just-- they're always going to be  
25 the first line of defense. But when those fail, w

2 need a backup. We need a plan B. Just like we  
3 prepare for fire drills, we install defibrillators,  
4 it's about readiness. It's about avoiding the  
5 painful question of what if we had something better  
6 prepared or put in place. This hearing is a chance  
7 to surface every question, concern, and idea so we  
8 can move forward thoughtfully. We welcome input from  
9 educators, medical professionals, first responders  
10 and families to ensure that this law is safe,  
11 effective, and realistic. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council  
13 Member. I'd like to also acknowledge we've been  
14 joined by Council Member Dinowitz. Finally, I would  
15 like to remind everyone who wish to testify in person  
16 today that you must fill out a witness slip which you  
17 can find on the desk of the Sergeant at Arms near the  
18 entrance of this room. Please fill out the slip, even  
19 if you already registered in advance, that you'll be  
20 testifying in-person today. If you wish to testify  
21 on Intro 142, 955, 1002, or Resolution 718 or 929,  
22 please indicate on the slip whether you're here to  
23 testify in favor or in opposition to the legislation.  
24 I also want to point out that we will not be voting  
25 on any legislation today to allow as many as possible

2 to testify. Testimony will be limited to three  
3 minutes per person, whether you're testifying in-  
4 person or on Zoom. I'm also going to ask my  
5 colleagues to limit their questions and comments to  
6 five minutes. Please note that witnesses who are  
7 here in person will testify before those who have  
8 signed into Zoom webinar. I will now turn it over to  
9 Education Committee Counsel to administer the oath.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good afternoon. Now,  
11 in accordance with the rules of the Council I will  
12 administer the affirmation to the witnesses from the  
13 Mayoral administration. I will call on each of you  
14 individually for a response. Please raise your right  
15 hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole  
16 truth and nothing but the truth before these  
17 committees and to respond honestly to Council Member  
18 questions? Dan Weisberg?

19 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: I do.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chancellor Aviles-  
21 Ramos?

22 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: I do.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Trevonda Kelly?

24 TREVONDA KELLY: I do.

25 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yael Kalban?

2 Yael Kalban: I do.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And for those here  
4 for Q&A, if you could raise your right hand as well?  
5 John Hammer? Korine Apollon? Robin Davson? DC  
6 Christina Melendez? Dr. Mia Theresa Date [sic]?  
7 Brenda Garcia? Kleber Palma? Kevin Moran?  
8 Superintendent Kamar Samuels? Superintendent Rafael  
9 Alvarez? Superintendent Meghan Dunn? Is that  
10 everybody? Thank you so much. You may begin your  
11 testimony.

12 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Good afternoon,  
13 Chair Joseph, Chair Williams and all the members of  
14 the Education and Civil and Human Rights Committees  
15 here today. Thank you for inviting me to testify  
16 about the diversity of New York City Public Schools,  
17 the largest school district in the nation. I am  
18 Melissa Aviles-Ramos, Chancellor of New York City  
19 Public Schools, and I am joined by First Deputy  
20 Chancellor Daniel Weisberg, Chief Enrollment Officer  
21 Trevonda Kelly, Deputy Chief Executive Officer of  
22 District Planning Yael Kalban, and other New York  
23 City Public Schools colleagues. I appreciate and  
24 share your commitment to this critically important  
25 topic which feels especially meaningful to discuss

2 the day before Juneteenth. The values of equity and  
3 diversity are deeply personal for me as a woman, a  
4 Latina, a life-long educator, and the other of a New  
5 York City Public School student. As you may know, my  
6 own mother sent me to Catholic school, because our  
7 local public school back in the 1980s did not provide  
8 the excellent and equitable education that she knew I  
9 deserved, and I have been working tirelessly ever  
10 since to ensure that families across our city from  
11 the Bronx to Brooklyn to southeast Queens have  
12 equitable opportunities within our public education  
13 system. As a teacher, principal, district leader,  
14 and now as Chancellor, I put equity at the forefront  
15 of my practice. I believe that diverse schools are  
16 an important goal. All students thrive when they can  
17 learn from each other's experiences and backgrounds.  
18 In New York City, diversity is one of our greatest  
19 strengths, and our diversity is rooted in all aspects  
20 of students and employees' identities, including  
21 cultural, racial, gender, ethnic, and religious  
22 diversity to name a few. For context, in 2023/24  
23 there were 912,000 students-- over 912,000 students  
24 in New York City public schools of many races and  
25 ethnicities. That breakdown was 42.2 percent Latin,

2 19.5 percent Black, 18.7 percent Asian, 16.2 percent  
3 White, 1.8 percent multiracial, and 1.2 percent  
4 Native American. Additionally, 73.5 percent of our  
5 students in the 23/24 school year were economically  
6 disadvantaged. 21.6 percent were students with  
7 disabilities, and 16.3 percent were English language  
8 learners. Our families, moreover, communicate in  
9 over 180 languages. These numbers when taken in  
10 aggregate capture a richly diverse school system.  
11 For example, approximately half of our schools do not  
12 have a 60 percent+ majority of one race or ethnicity,  
13 and only one in five schools has a single racial  
14 group making up 75 percent of student enrollment. At  
15 the same time, I acknowledge that not all our schools  
16 reflect the full diversity of our city. In large  
17 part, this is due to demographic realities, most of  
18 which have been outside of our control. These  
19 include entrenched housing patterns, family's  
20 decisions around where to reside within New York City  
21 and where to enroll their children, and our  
22 enrollment processes are largely driven by family  
23 choice, families moving outside the City in the wake  
24 of the pandemic, as reported in the New York Times in  
25 2023 and 2024, families registering their students in

2 private parochial or charter schools and more.

3 Additionally, consistent with Supreme Court

4 precedent, New York City Public Schools does not use

5 race as a factor in school admissions. As mentioned,

6 New York City Public Schools admission processes have

7 been historically guided by family choice, and while

8 we cannot control family's geographic or educational

9 preferences, we can uplift and support communities

10 that are eager for increased diversity in their

11 schools. To that end, there are numerous local

12 diversity initiatives that we have encouraged or

13 helped facilitate. For instance, we operate

14 diversity and admissions initiatives in over 100

15 schools which are calibrated to create greater access

16 for groups that are under-represented in those

17 schools such as low-income students, students in

18 temporary housing, English language learners, and

19 more. Each DIA [sic] initiative is driven by

20 community efforts like those in Districts One, Three,

21 13, and 15, and/or school leadership teams. Further,

22 we set aside seats for student with disabilities at

23 every middle and high school to ensure representation

24 and access for these student and to ensure compliance

25 with the law. This September, we will open our third

2 new accelerated high school. These schools will  
3 together serve upwards of 1,500 students at scale  
4 with admissions priorities that promote greater  
5 representation of student from across neighborhoods  
6 and demographic groups while still ensuring access  
7 for local families. We have also successfully  
8 increased diversity at some of our highest-demand  
9 schools by relocating them to buildings where they  
10 can grow or merge with other schools serving  
11 different demographics, creating more diverse schools  
12 that are accessible to even more students. These  
13 schools, including PS150 in District Two and East  
14 Village Community School in District One enroll  
15 students through our Diversity in Admissions program  
16 and have grown significantly since these changes with  
17 substantial increases in their percentages of  
18 students living in poverty even doubling at PS150.  
19 Additionally, we have worked hand-in-hand with  
20 community education councils to center diversity and  
21 integration in our rezoning work. We aim to  
22 simultaneously tackle overcrowding and integration by  
23 drawing new school zones that are appropriately sized  
24 and geographically manageable for families, and that  
25 increase the diversity of these zones wherever



2 possible. I want to take this opportunity to  
3 highlight some of the excellent integration  
4 initiatives that have been driven by communities such  
5 as District 15, 13, and Three, whose superintendents  
6 are here today to further speak to this work.

7 Implemented in 2018, the community-driven District 15  
8 Diversity Plan focused on middle schools across the  
9 district, an area that includes Boerum Hill, Carroll  
10 Gardens, Cobble Hill, Fort Greene, Park Slope, Sunset  
11 Park, Red Hook, and Windsor Terrace. This plan  
12 prioritized admissions for underserved groups and  
13 supported equity-focused programming. I'm proud to  
14 say that the district has made notable gains in  
15 building inclusive school cultures, ensuring  
16 individual schools better reflect the demographics of  
17 the district, and uplifting community voices  
18 decision-making. Similarly, in District 13 and  
19 Three, community members and leaders have worked  
20 together to implement district-wide diversity plans  
21 and intentional school mergers. For example, the  
22 merger of the Academy of Arts and Letters and PS305  
23 in Brooklyn a few years ago has allowed for diverse  
24 classes along with purposeful and thoughtful  
25 opportunities for peer-to-peer relationship building,

2 including the advisory, electives, after school  
3 programming and more. We've also seen success with  
4 the merge of Lafayette Academy and Westside  
5 Collaborative in Manhattan. I'd like to thank the  
6 superintendents here today for their leadership and  
7 for empowering their families as we work to uplift  
8 and encourage more diverse communities. I want to  
9 close by zooming out for a moment to look at equity  
10 and opportunity with a broader lens. School  
11 integration is often portrayed in the media in black  
12 and white terms, literally, but that one-dimensional  
13 portrayal simply doesn't reflect the demographics of  
14 our city in 2025, and with it come an inaccurate and  
15 dangerous implication that if we just put students of  
16 color in desks next to white students, then  
17 achievement will automatically rise. I reject that  
18 premise entirely. So, while of course we should  
19 uplift diversity in all its forms, I believe  
20 increasing equity goes far beyond simply moving  
21 students' enrolments. What families tell us matters  
22 most to them and what will guarantee we deliver an  
23 equitable education to all students is ensuring that  
24 every one of our schools, no matter the demographics  
25 or zip code, provides an academically rigorous world-

2 class education. That's why we are going full-speed  
3 on expanding the pie, increasing educational access  
4 and opportunity by growing the number of high-quality  
5 options available, especially in historically  
6 marginalized communities of color. We are providing  
7 families with a multitude of choices, from  
8 neighborhood schools to schools with specific focus  
9 areas, from dual language programs, to specialized  
10 programs for students with disabilities, from early  
11 college programs, to CETE schools, and much more so  
12 that families can select the setting and programs  
13 that best fits their child. That's why we have added  
14 103 bilingual programs and 1,400 specialized autism  
15 program seats since 2022, why we brought Bard Early  
16 College High School to the south Bronx in east New  
17 York, and why we're about to open the first Early  
18 College high school to partner with an HBCU in  
19 southeast Queens. It's why we have created two  
20 dyslexia-focused elementary schools and innovative  
21 high school programs like Northwell School of  
22 Sciences. And when it comes to our strategic  
23 priorities and initiatives more broadly, equity is  
24 still at the center. We are working hard every day  
25 to address longstanding and unacceptable educational

2 disparities. First and foremost, we are ensuring our  
3 children, especially low-income students of color,  
4 become strong readers and mathematicians, doubling  
5 down on research-based instruction and high-quality  
6 curricula through New York City Reads and Solves. We  
7 have expanded our student pathways work to broaden  
8 and reimagine post-secondary preparation for our  
9 students, and launched innovative family empowerment  
10 efforts like New York City Public Schools Cares. We  
11 have updated our Fair Student funding formula, one of  
12 the most equitable school funding formulas in the  
13 nation. We are hiring an increasingly diverse  
14 workforce; 48 percent of our teachers and 55 percent  
15 of our principals are people of color. We are  
16 working hard to ensure students across all  
17 neighborhoods are safe and supported, and we are  
18 relentlessly pushing for improved academic outcomes.  
19 I want to be clear, where we do see separation of  
20 students with differing backgrounds in otherwise  
21 diverse neighborhoods, we want to explore where and  
22 how we can break down barriers in partnership with  
23 community stakeholders. As I previously shared, we  
24 are eager to empower schools in districts to  
25 determine what works best for their community. I'm

2 proud of all we've done to advance equity, access,  
3 and opportunity in New York City public schools,  
4 especially at this moment in time, but I'm also eager  
5 to do more. I know the work is far from finished.  
6 Thank you for your continued partnership and for  
7 inviting me to testify, and I look forward to  
8 answering your questions on the topic.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And the legislation  
10 part.

11 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Thought you  
12 might be tired of hearing me talk. And finally, I'd  
13 like to turn to the legislation also being considered  
14 today. Intro 142 would require New York City Public  
15 Schools to conduct a study on student access to home  
16 internet. New York City Public Schools currently  
17 provides resources to families on both devices and  
18 broadband plans on our website. We believe students  
19 should have access to internet-enabled devices, and  
20 we're happy to work with our partners to close  
21 technological gaps. However, we don't believe that a  
22 biannual survey is the best way to ascertain data  
23 points on internet access. Every school is  
24 responsible for providing devices to students who  
25 need them, and we are working with the New York City

2 Office of Technology and Innovation on an outreach  
3 campaign to inform students and families of discount  
4 broadband options this fall. Intro 955 calls for  
5 annual reporting on afterschool programs. We are  
6 excited by the Mayor's commitment to afterschool  
7 programming and look forward to working  
8 collaboratively with our Department of Youth and  
9 Community Development colleagues to ensure thoughtful  
10 allocation of these additional seats. Finally, Intro  
11 1002 addresses the stocking of airway clearance  
12 devices. Abdominal thrust also known as the Heimlich  
13 maneuver is still the recommended first aid technique  
14 to be used in case of choking of children, and our  
15 health experts recommend its usage. We appreciate  
16 the Council's interest in the health of our students.  
17 Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you,  
19 Chancellor Ramos. I'm going to pass it over to Chair  
20 Williams. She gets the honor today.

21 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Oh, gosh. Thank  
22 you, Chair. Really excited to learn more about  
23 District 15, 13, and Three. I was just listening to  
24 this podcast that an amazing educator that works for  
25 New York City Public Schools told me about, and it

2 was actually about this exact topic in District 28,  
3 in Queens. So, just wondering if you can share some  
4 insight on what happened there, because from what  
5 I've listened to in the podcast, things kind of went  
6 left.

7 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: I apologize,  
8 Chair, but I'm not familiar with what you're talking  
9 about.

10 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Oh, okay. Yeah,  
11 District 28 was supposed to be another one of those  
12 schools that got a grant for the diversity  
13 initiatives, but there was a ton of community  
14 pushback and I think the super-- it's now two, three  
15 superintendents removed. I know Dr. Pate did a pretty  
16 good job before she left to go to your central  
17 office, but yes, just wanted to know, because I know  
18 you have examples of what has happened by way of  
19 District 15, 13, and Three, but just wanted to know  
20 if you had some insight on status and what happened  
21 in D28 in Queens.

22 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: So, Chair, if I  
23 may, would love it if we could set up a briefing to  
24 give you a background on D28.

2 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Okay, no problem.

3 And I just wanted to make a note that I think it's so  
4 wonderful that you mentioned the Bronx STEAM Center,  
5 and I look forward to bringing a Queens STEAM Center,  
6 and I just look forward to having one in each borough  
7 by way of what the Mayor has said that he wanted to  
8 do. The Mayor has stated multiple times that he wants  
9 a STEAM Center in each borough. So, the next question  
10 I have is, how is New York City Public Schools  
11 working in tandem with City Hall to protect all  
12 students given the recent escalation by federal  
13 authorities in detaining minors across the country  
14 with two being detained in New York City?

15 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Thank you for  
16 the question, and I think the Council knows that this  
17 is something very near and dear to my heart, having  
18 led Project Open Arms at the start of my career at  
19 Central. So, it is a very privileged seat that I sit  
20 in given how important this is to be Chancellor  
21 during this time. I want to continue to reiterate  
22 that we have been clear that non-local law  
23 enforcement officers cannot enter our building  
24 without judicial warrants. As such, we have trained  
25 parent coordinators, safety agents in collaboration



2 with NYPD. We have trained principals. We have  
3 trained teachers. We've done Know Your Rights  
4 training for families. We continue to do Know Their  
5 Rights trainings. We also are having community  
6 conversations. One kicked off in the Bronx, and we  
7 are planning to do one in Brooklyn. These are the  
8 start of many conversations where we're talking about  
9 how to better partner with community-based  
10 organizations and people who have social and  
11 political capital in the communities who can escalate  
12 matters to us. That's not only reserved for  
13 immigration. That's also when we talk about the  
14 safety of our young people and things like gang and  
15 gun violence. So, I'm very excited to continue to  
16 move that forward. But as it relates to the current  
17 situation with ICE, our policies remain in place.  
18 The training will continue. Whenever we receive  
19 escalations about ICE in or around a particular  
20 school, I personally work with a team to investigate  
21 those and to see if we actually-- if there's actually  
22 any truth to them. We have also through Project Open  
23 Arms paired families with organizations that can  
24 provide support and representation. So, we're doing  
25 a number of things, all the things that we have

2 always done, and we're not going to stop doing those  
3 things.

4 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you. Given  
5 that equitable funding is critical to addressing  
6 segregation, how is New York City Public Schools  
7 ensuring that foundation aid that you referenced is  
8 being allocated in a way that directly supports  
9 school integration efforts, particularly in  
10 historically underfunded schools with high  
11 populations of English language learners and student  
12 from marginalized communities?

13 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Well, we're  
14 certainly disappointed that the suggested weights  
15 [sic] that we made for foundation aid weren't fully  
16 accepted. So, I think just putting forth the formula  
17 that-- the one that we put forth shows our commitment  
18 to our core values. And I'm going to ask our First  
19 Deputy Chancellor to please provide further detail.

20 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Thank  
21 you, Chair, for the question. It's critically  
22 important. We know it's not the only resource that  
23 matters, but school funding matters tremendously.  
24 It's something that's on our mind all the time.  
25 We're fortunate as the Chancellor mentioned in her

2 testimony that our Fair Student Funding formula by  
3 which most of the funds that go to our schools is  
4 distributed is distributed largely based on student  
5 need. There was a study a couple of years ago by  
6 some academics at Georgetown which found that our  
7 method of school funding was the top two most  
8 equitable in the country. So, it doesn't mean we  
9 can't do more, but we have a decent starting point,  
10 and then we're proud that we're able to add an  
11 additional weight for student in temporary housing  
12 which is-- you all are keenly aware is a very large  
13 population in New York City schools, as well as for  
14 schools that serve a concentration of students with  
15 additional needs. So, that added to about \$100  
16 million in addition. It was not-- it was increasing  
17 the pie. Directed and targeted, Council Member, at  
18 specifically at the schools serving those  
19 populations. So, there are other funding streams as  
20 you're aware like Title 1 that are also directed to  
21 schools that-- and to students who come from low-  
22 income households. As the Chancellor mentioned, it  
23 would be a huge boost to our ability to provide  
24 school funding equitably if the state were to adjust  
25 its formula, for example, to account more clearly for

2 the needs of our students with disabilities. If they  
3 were to add a weight for students in temporary  
4 housing and then frankly for our ability to fund  
5 these initiatives overall, if they were to take  
6 account of the regional cost that exists here in New  
7 York City. So, we have some things to be proud of and  
8 our students are benefitting from that. Some of the  
9 programs you'll hear about today are only because  
10 we're able to direct those funds to where the student  
11 need is, but there's much more we could be doing.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: First Deputy  
13 Chancellor, just want to follow up real quick. Is  
14 there a possibility to bring back the working group  
15 that we had for SFS since we did not get the  
16 foundation aid that we did require, that we did ask?  
17 And some of it is, as we know, are tied with  
18 restrictions. So, I think this should be-- we should  
19 revisit that possibility of, you know, the group  
20 meeting again and really looking at it. As we said,  
21 this was a working-- a work in progress. It wasn't a  
22 done deal.

23 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Happy to do it.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.  
25

2 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: And  
3 thank you, Chair, for your service on that group.

4 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Are there any  
5 funding sources that the City has made directly  
6 available to schools, utilized to further diversity  
7 initiatives? For example, schools that wish to  
8 implement school-wide enrichment models instead of  
9 GNC programs, or two vastly demographically different  
10 schools that may be merging, are they given resources  
11 funding to facilitate community discussions before,  
12 throughout and directly after the process?

13 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: So, because  
14 diversity and equity is at the core of everything  
15 that we do, we look at the funding that we provide  
16 from the program offices as part of everything. So,  
17 again, when we provide funding to schools to support  
18 with Future Ready NYC, that is not an initiative that  
19 is reserved for more affluent and higher performing  
20 students. We are very strategic and make sure that  
21 it is going into marginalized communities with  
22 minoritized children. And so we can-- we are happy  
23 to talk about all of these initiatives and programs,  
24 but one of the other things that we do, and I know  
25 our First Deputy Chancellor is going to talk more

2 about this, is work strategically with the  
3 superintendent to identify where are the areas of  
4 concern when it comes to diversity and equity in a  
5 specific district and then activate. This is one of  
6 the reasons why we are seeing the HBCU school and the  
7 community that it's going to sit in as one of the  
8 reasons why when the Bronx stood up and said we want  
9 a STEAM Center and they had the location for it, we  
10 were able to move forward with it. These are things  
11 that are in response to the community, but they  
12 reflect our core values around diversity and equity.  
13 First Deputy Chancellor?

14 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yeah,  
15 thank you, Chancellor. And Chair, so we try not to  
16 put too many restrictions on the funds that we give  
17 to schools. So, I just want to directly answer your  
18 question. So, one of the positive things about Fair  
19 Student Funding is it is not restrictive. We don't  
20 say that it has to go towards, for example, school-  
21 wide enrichment models, but if that is what a school  
22 wants to pursue, that funding is there. The-- you  
23 know, in general the hold harmless money that we just  
24 put out I think was \$128 million. that's not  
25 restricted funds. Some of the funds that come from

2 the state and the feds, as Cahir Joseph said, are  
3 restricted. So, to directly answer your question, do  
4 we have a restrictive funding stream for those  
5 particular purposes? Generally not. There are some  
6 grants that go to those things, but what we always  
7 try to do, and I think this is one of the areas where  
8 we see real progress, is provide robust funding to  
9 our schools and then have the superintendents-- and  
10 you'll hear from some of them in moment-- put their  
11 ear to the ground with the principals. If what  
12 they're hearing from families, from students is we  
13 want a school-wide enrichment model at this school,  
14 then what we expect of them is they're going to raise  
15 that up and say we're doing this. We need  
16 assistance, technical assistance. We need funding,  
17 and then our job under the Chancellor's leadership is  
18 to try to support them in doing that, rather than us  
19 sitting back here and saying we're putting out this  
20 restricted funding and hope that you all are going to  
21 find it to be helpful.

22 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: I do want to  
23 add something to that. That also works as a  
24 mechanism to protect our children, because what we  
25 don't want is to just give funding streams that are

2 so flexible and not have oversight when a district is  
3 in need of certain things. And so that's why I have  
4 charged the superintendents to make sure that they or  
5 a representative from their team is present on every  
6 principal's budget meeting, because I want to make  
7 sure that these dollars that we have given to the  
8 schools, which if I may be frank, had I know that we  
9 were going to give this much money to schools, I  
10 would have stayed a principal and I wouldn't be this  
11 Chancellor. But we want to make sure that schools  
12 are making well on the promise to children and using  
13 those budgets. So, to give you a pointed example, if  
14 a school doesn't have a library, which as I see it,  
15 that is an equity issue. If you do not have a  
16 library and you do not have a librarian, that's a  
17 problem. Now, if you have stretched your dollars  
18 beyond spandex and you still can't afford a  
19 librarian, and we are certainly going to step in and  
20 support, but what's not going to happen is that we  
21 are going to comfort the center of adults and hire,  
22 you know, tons of administrators or people who are  
23 going to make things comfortable for other adults and  
24 not center the equity focus of this administration.  
25 So, please know that that flexibility allows for



2 schools to make-- to reflect our core values around  
3 equity and diversity, but we also step in and where  
4 we see an issue we advise.

5 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Yes. I actually  
6 have a few schools that don't have a library. The  
7 library is like a storage unit. So, I would love to  
8 touch bases with you on that, because they don't have  
9 a library. Therefore, they don't have a--

10 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: [interposing]  
11 You should.

12 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: A few of my  
13 schools, actually.

14 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: That would be  
15 great.

16 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Okay. I'll ask a  
17 few more questions, and then I'll maybe come back.  
18 So, what is the current demographic breakdown of the  
19 New York City Public Schools teacher workforce? And  
20 as the system prepares to hire thousands of new  
21 teachers to comply with the class size mandate, how  
22 is New York City Public Schools ensuring that this  
23 hiring also advances a workforce that reflects the  
24 diversity of the students it serves? And I know

2 certain areas, the demographic looks a little  
3 different.

4 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Yep. Queens--

5 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: It's a little  
6 shaky.

7 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Well, that's  
8 why we got to work with our superintendents. And  
9 what I will say is that we recognize that diversity  
10 in our teaching profession had been a challenge for  
11 many, many years, and so it's not just about filling  
12 3,700 additional seats, especially now as we attempt  
13 to-- now as we work to comply with class size law.  
14 So, we don't want just 3,700 teachers who are not  
15 reflecting the needs of our children. And so we are  
16 being super intentional about how we partner with New  
17 York City teaching fellows, our own pipeline like New  
18 York City Men Teach, our paraprofessionals to teacher  
19 pipeline, in making sure that we have people who are  
20 invested in our communities to stand in those  
21 communities. That's not only for our teachers.  
22 That's also for our social workers. So, one of  
23 things that Chief Mark Rampersant has been really  
24 intentional about is working with universities to  
25 identify social work interns who can actually work in

2 communities that they understand and that they have  
3 an investment in. first Deputy Chancellor, if you  
4 can go into the breakdown?

5 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Sure  
6 thing, Chancellor. So, the current breakdown for  
7 teachers is 52 percent White, 16 percent Black or  
8 African American, 19 percent Hispanic, eight percent  
9 Asian, and less than one percent of other  
10 demographics. Principles, by the way, I don't know  
11 if specifically Chair you asked about principals, but  
12 45 percent are White, 30 percent are Black or African  
13 American, 19 percent Hispanic, and five percent  
14 Asian. So, and just to put a little bit of context  
15 on that, that makes us, New York City, the most  
16 diverse educator workforce in New York State among  
17 any of the large districts. Just put that out there.  
18 Not to say that-- as the Chancellor says, we don't  
19 have a long way to go to make sure that we are hiring  
20 equitably across all groups and making sure that our  
21 kids are seeing tremendous diversity in their  
22 educator and other workforce. This is in a country  
23 where about 80 percent of the teachers are White  
24 nationwide. And we're about now-- a majority of our  
25 student nationwide now identify as students of color.

2 So, the-- and just to say on what we're doing, right-  
3 - we're about to do a big hiring push for purposes of  
4 lowering class size. One of the best tools we have  
5 on diversity which we're really trying to lean on, is  
6 alternative certification. Our teaching fellows,  
7 many of you know about teaching fellows. We are very  
8 fortunate to have a Chancellor who came to New York  
9 City Public Schools to the teaching fellows program.  
10 That gets us both shortage area teachers, a good  
11 supply of shortage area teachers, a good supply of  
12 shortage area teachers for disciplines like special  
13 education and ENL, but also our most diverse  
14 pipeline. And so we have doubled the size of our  
15 incoming teaching fellows class. Final comment,  
16 Chair Joseph has heard me say this before. One of  
17 the main barriers-- we did a survey of our  
18 paraprofessionals who should be an amazing pipeline  
19 for our teacher workforce and a huge boost to  
20 diversity as well. It's a pretty small number of  
21 paraprofessionals who get their teaching license  
22 every year, and we surveyed them because we want to  
23 increase that and ask them about obstacles. You  
24 know, first of all, ask them about interest, and as  
25 you can imagine, overwhelming majority said they have

2 interest in becoming teachers, and we ask them what  
3 are the obstacles. The number one obstacle is cost.  
4 And so one of the reasons our alternative  
5 certification teaching fellows program is successful  
6 is we subsidize tuition. That takes money. We have  
7 to find a budget for that. We need help from you all  
8 and others in order to do that, but it's extremely  
9 effective at broadening the talent pipeline that  
10 comes into New York City teaching profession.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Wanted to do a quick  
12 follow-up on your teacher recruitment. But we also--  
13 there's also a study that says that most of the  
14 teachers that are newly hired are also in low-income  
15 neighborhoods. How do we look at that? And that's  
16 the reality, right? When we really talk about  
17 outcomes and how do really serve our most vulnerable  
18 New Yorkers is making sure the talent is also in low-  
19 income neighborhoods, and how do we support that?

20 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Well, a couple  
21 of things. One is that we have been really focused  
22 on retention just as much as recruitment, and that's  
23 why with New York City Reads and Solves it was  
24 important that we have the coaching mechanism in  
25 place to support those teachers. Because what we

2 didn't want is for the curriculum to decorate the  
3 shelves like in the past where we would get books and  
4 materials-- Chair Joseph, I know you know what I'm  
5 talking about. We probably had a shelf with about  
6 five or six different additions from year over year.  
7 We didn't want that to happen, and so we knew that  
8 something different had to happen, and that  
9 differences in the coaching. So having shoulder-to-  
10 shoulder job-embedded support, not getting feedback  
11 just on a 15-minute snapshot, but someone who was  
12 telling you in real time how you can adjust your  
13 practice. That allows for-- that ensures teacher  
14 retention, because teachers aren't trying to figure  
15 it out on the ground. Second part of it is the most  
16 important component which is making sure that we're  
17 giving them the curriculum and curricular resources  
18 they need so teachers are not designing curriculum,  
19 as I'm sure you did, too, because I did, too. We  
20 were writing our own curriculum. It was advertised  
21 as teacher autonomy, but it was not teacher autonomy.  
22 It was us flying while we were building, and that is  
23 unacceptable. And actually, the union, CBA, tells us  
24 we need to make sure that we are providing curriculum  
25 which we have not done across the system. So that is

2 also contributing to teacher retention. The other  
3 piece of it is making sure that we are celebrating  
4 the adults and creating pipelines for leadership, and  
5 I don't just mean going from teacher to assistant  
6 principal and principal. There are people who want  
7 to stay teachers forever. How do we honor that role?  
8 We have master model teacher opportunities. We're  
9 collaborating with the UFT so we can have those  
10 successful teacher centers. These are all things.  
11 And then finally, in terms of the specific  
12 communities, we offer earlier hiring commitment  
13 opportunities so that way people can go out--  
14 principals can go out and they can seek their talent,  
15 and they can position themselves early on,  
16 incentivizing hires in these communities, but as you  
17 stated in your question, it's not a problem to get  
18 them in. It's a problem to keep them there. And I  
19 truly believe that the coaching and the support that  
20 we're giving our teachers now with New York City  
21 Reads is going to really work-- really work in our  
22 favor.

23 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: So, just a follow-  
24 up to that, question around Culturally-Responsive and  
25 Sustaining Education, CRSE, which remains available

2 on the New York City Public Schools website. How has  
3 New York City Public Schools continued to advance  
4 this approach where professional development,  
5 curricula, or programming if any are currently in  
6 place to support and implement the CRSE framework  
7 across schools? I know there's like a ton of books.  
8 I feel like I don't remember the titles. [inaudible]  
9 a title about, like, you know, white teachers in  
10 black communities. I think there's like lots of  
11 resources, and when I saw this I thought of these  
12 resources and thinking about how that is getting  
13 implemented considering that while there is  
14 diversity, you know, culturally-responsive  
15 professional development I think is so important.

16 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: It's very  
17 important. And the work of Chris Emdin [sp?] and Dr.  
18 Goldie Mohammad [sp?], they all-- it all continues to  
19 live very much in our schools. One of the things that  
20 I'm super proud of is that we took a lot of people  
21 from our teaching and learning team which was at  
22 central, and we redeployed them into district teams.  
23 That was key, because now that gives extra experts in  
24 the teaching and learning field to be able to work  
25 directly with districts and go into schools. Our DEI



2 team is still alive and strong under the leadership  
3 of our Chief Diversity Officer Karine Apollon, and we  
4 also have Jonathan Foy who started that work in  
5 previous administrations and continues to lead that  
6 work. So, our DEI coaches are still very much  
7 providing professional learning, and not only are  
8 they providing professional learning, but they're  
9 working, again, shoulder to shoulder with  
10 superintendents. I also want to bring up our meeting  
11 the moment work, because when we talk about CRSE, it  
12 goes beyond what we have talked about historically.  
13 When we think about the uptick in antisemitism and  
14 Islamophobia, the meeting the moment work has been  
15 incredibly important. It all goes back to education.  
16 And so the training that we do with facing history is  
17 also part of our DEI work, because we know that when  
18 young people understand differences in race and  
19 culture and ethnicity and linguistic diversity, but  
20 still see the through-line across all the different  
21 communities, they do coexist in a very meaningful  
22 way, and so this work continues. It will continue  
23 despite everything that's happening. We don't shy  
24 away from that work. I also just made my eight-month  
25 anniversary, if you will, and it's been a busy year.

2 So we're excited to close out this school year and  
3 bring together groups. I have my Student Advisory  
4 Council, my Superintendent and Principal Advisory  
5 Councils, starting a Teacher Advisory Council. We  
6 have an amazing Parent Advisory Council, and this is  
7 a topic that is perfect for our subcommittees to  
8 really tackle so we can have engagement across  
9 stakeholder groups to inform us on how we can further  
10 this work in the upcoming school year.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Chair  
12 Williams. My question is, what is New York City  
13 Public Schools currently doing to increase the number  
14 of inclusive schools to serve emergent multilanguage  
15 learners and students with disabilities? In this  
16 conversation, they are so important.

17 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: And as you can  
18 see, John Hammer is very eager to sit in the seat and  
19 tell you all about--

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] I see.

21 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: this work. You  
22 don't even have to hear me talk, Chair.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: No, he's right  
24 there. It's all his. Take it away.

2 CHIEF HAMMER: Thank you. Thank you,  
3 Chancellor, and I just want to thank you, Chair  
4 Joseph, for the opportunity to share our efforts to  
5 fully include student with disabilities and English  
6 language learners in all of our school communities.  
7 I'm just honored to work for an organization that  
8 truly believes that disability and multilingualism  
9 are aspects of diversity and it's ranked in our  
10 school culture and helps shape our future leaders. I  
11 just also have to say personally it is absolutely  
12 inspirational to work for a Chancellor who is a  
13 warrior for this work each and every day-- keeps our  
14 entire division inspired, you know, to do this work  
15 on behalf of her. We are proud to offer 566  
16 bilingual education programs in 12 languages. This  
17 year we opened our first ASL dual language program in  
18 District Two at the 47 school in District Two. And  
19 since 2022, we've opened over a 100 new bilingual  
20 education programs, as the Chancellor testified  
21 earlier. Turning specifically to special education.  
22 Not only are our schools expected to welcome and  
23 serve student with disabilities, but schools are  
24 expected to meaningfully include those students with  
25 disabilities in a general education classroom to the

2 greatest extent appropriate for every student. I'm  
3 proud to share that two out of every three of our  
4 student with IEPs spends the majority of their school  
5 day in classrooms that are inclusive without student-  
6 - and includes students without IEPs. Where we are:  
7 one of the areas that we're currently focusing this  
8 work is around including students with greater needs,  
9 students that are traditionally recommended to  
10 receive services in District 75 settings. For  
11 context on District 75, 91 percent of students come  
12 from low-income families, 75 percent are Black and  
13 Hispanic. Broadly, we are working to disrupt the  
14 system where families that have resources attend  
15 private schools via Carter cases while low-income  
16 students of color are served in District 75, far from  
17 their homes. Now our District 75 schools, they are  
18 doing phenomenal work. I'm so proud of our  
19 principals, our teachers, but the truth is that many  
20 families, they want access to services, high-quality  
21 therapy, high-quality instruction. They want that in  
22 their local community school so that their children  
23 can learn alongside their siblings and their  
24 neighbors. We believe in a system where no child  
25 should need to leave their community to receive those

2 therapies and those services. So how do we do that,  
3 right? That's the big question. And it's our belief  
4 that the programs we offer, NEST, AIMS, Horizon, for  
5 example, we believe these programs are highly  
6 competitive to any nonpublic school program that is  
7 out there, and our families largely agree. We have  
8 over 2,400 applicants for NEST and Horizon, over 350  
9 for our AIMS program, and we're working to expand  
10 these programs in historically underserved  
11 communities. This will allow us to ensure the equity  
12 in the special education process. This fall, as I've  
13 testified earlier this year, we expanded specialized  
14 autism programs in Districts Five, 12 and 14. We  
15 said any incoming kindergarten student that could  
16 benefit from NEST, Horizon, and AIMS would be offered  
17 a seat in these programs, and as a result, we've been  
18 able to keep students closer to home. D75 referrals  
19 have reduced from 56 percent to 19 percent. Average  
20 distance between home and school reduced from 2.7  
21 miles to 1.5 miles. Ninety-three percent of students  
22 that were placed in these programs through this pilot  
23 were Black and Hispanic. Next year, we're going to  
24 continue to expand specialized programs. We're  
25 seeking to provide the highest quality services to

2 student in their local communities. Not only are  
3 these programs desired by families, they deliver  
4 strong results. NEST and Horizon boast a 97 percent  
5 graduation rate, and they have the power to change  
6 the entire school community. I'm excited that we have  
7 Superintendent Alvarez here today. District 15 has  
8 some shining examples of specialized programs. One of  
9 those being 15K958, and 15K015. I'm just going to  
10 give Superintendent Alvarez an opportunity to speak  
11 about some of the great work happening in this--

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] Thank  
13 you for that question on D75, but our students who  
14 face-- who are part of that-- who are part of the D75  
15 community, still face accessibility to buildings. So  
16 that's going to be something when we talk about  
17 equity and segregation, that's going to be something  
18 we need to address. Our schools are not accessible  
19 and our student are normally left behind and having  
20 to travel so far because their schools are not  
21 accessible. And even-- not parents cannot attend  
22 their shows if the buildings are not accessible. So,  
23 when we talk about equity and segregation, that also  
24 plays a huge role in having accessible to education  
25 that's nearby. And D75 students also face barriers

2 when navigating admissions process, so we have to  
3 talk about that, not only to schools, but also  
4 school-based programming when we talk about  
5 afterschool. So, our students in D75 cannot attend  
6 Summer Rising 'til the end of the day. Why? Because  
7 there's no transportation for them. So, those are  
8 also areas we have to address and concerns with  
9 families navigating admissions process to middle  
10 school and high school. Talk to me about that.

11 CHIEF HAMMER: I appreciate all those  
12 points, Chair Joseph, and we know that there is  
13 funding for accessibility in the capital plan. We  
14 appreciate the Council--

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] It's  
16 not enough.

17 CHIEF HAMMER: We appreciate the Council--

18 -  
19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] We  
20 asked for \$1.1 billion. It's only \$800 million, and  
21 the goal-- so that sets our goals for making schools  
22 accessible for our students with disability, we set  
23 it back.

24 CHIEF HAMMER: We appreciate your  
25 advocacy on that front, and know that we need to do

2 this work as quickly as possible for our students and  
3 families. District 75 has traditionally operated its  
4 own afterschool program which is-- which actually  
5 runs in-- every District 75 school is operating some  
6 sort of an afterschool program through a separate  
7 allocation.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Til what time?

9 CHIEF HAMMER: I--

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] So,  
11 let's say my kid wants to attend a Summer Rising  
12 program, they cannot. Those are the realities,  
13 right? We know it exists, but how can we make it  
14 better? That's going to be our next step and how we  
15 continue to work in our conversations together.  
16 We're here to work together.

17 CHIEF HAMMER: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Right? So, we know  
19 it exists, because my-- I can find a bunch of kids.  
20 You know me, I'm good for that. I'll find a bunch of  
21 kids that will come here and say, yeah, I have to go  
22 home at the regular time, four o'clock, because I  
23 can't stay any longer because there's no  
24 transportation to take me home.



2 CHIEF HAMMER: We completely acknowledge  
3 that we have work to do, and we feel completely  
4 grateful for your partnership in getting it done.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Talk to me about  
6 admissions for our D75 students. How do we help them  
7 navigate the middle school and high school?

8 CHIEF ENROLLMENT OFFICER KELLY: Hi,  
9 Chair Joseph.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Hi.

11 CHIEF ENROLLMENT OFFICER KELLY: Thank  
12 you so much for your question. We do have a  
13 specific-- a special team that works with our  
14 families who need support. And so, we provide the  
15 one-on-one support that they need to provide them  
16 with the information. We also are lucky to have to a  
17 District 75 team dedicated to supporting families  
18 with placement. So, we are providing support to  
19 families in many different ways. I know especially  
20 those who are interested in screening, screen  
21 programs, we do provide support to those families as  
22 well, and that's also including making sure that they  
23 are aware that these seats exists, and so that  
24 information is in my schools. And so, there's a--  
25 I'm not sure if there's one specific thing that you

2 want to talk about more, but there are a lot of  
3 supports that we are providing to families. Of  
4 course, there are ways that we can improve, but our  
5 goal is to make sure that we are providing even at  
6 our Family Welcome Centers and other call centers--  
7 we are always making sure that we are specifically  
8 trying to support families who need the support the  
9 most. So, I'm happy to dig in deeper if that's  
10 something that you want to talk about.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

12 Especially our parents who English is not their first  
13 language, what type of support are we providing?  
14 students that does not have digital devices-- a phone  
15 is not enough. How do we sit down when language is  
16 not the first-- when English is not the first  
17 language, and how do we support those families in  
18 navigating those spaces? And I always tell about my--  
19 - the student that live in my district that got into  
20 one of those topnotch schools, but my student has to  
21 travel two and a half hours each way to get to that  
22 school every single day, and she's late in not  
23 getting her services. So, it's a great thing we're  
24 celebrating. We're making sure our D75 students or  
25 student with IEPs are getting into their specialized

2 schools, but they have to-- they can't spend two and  
3 a half hours on the bus going and coming back. She  
4 gets on the bus everyday at 6:30 in the morning. She  
5 doesn't get to school until 8:20, 8:30 every single  
6 day. For me, that's unacceptable. What kind of  
7 message we sent to that young person? I always tell  
8 her, hate the bus, don't hate the school.

9 CHIEF ENROLLMENT OFFICER KELLY: To that  
10 point, when it comes to transportation, of course, we  
11 and my colleague John spoke about adding the  
12 additional programs, which one of the goals is to  
13 make sure that those families, those students can go  
14 to programs closer to home. I don't want to speak  
15 too much about that, because that's in his  
16 wheelhouse. But what I will say to your other points  
17 about the services that we provide to families who  
18 don't speak English or English is not their first  
19 language, we provide a lot of information sessions  
20 just in terms of our admission process. We offer  
21 those session in multiple languages. We also have  
22 them translated so that fam-- interpretation services  
23 so the families can follow what's being said. All of  
24 our materials are communicated to families in all of  
25 the different languages that we support. So, they

2 also have access that way. If they were to reach out  
3 to one of our call centers, they will also have  
4 access to a translator. Our family welcome centers  
5 also provide support in languages. Either we have  
6 counselors who speak a variety of languages that  
7 mirrors their communities, or they will use our  
8 translation services as well. So, we are trying and  
9 we are getting better at ways in which we can use  
10 these tools to make sure that we are giving families  
11 who don't speak English that one-on-one support where  
12 languages and that communication is not strained  
13 because they don't speak English. And so we're  
14 trying to get better there, but we do provide a lot  
15 of services in the languages of our community.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Wanted to talk  
17 quickly about our student in our D75 that are  
18 collocated in other buildings. How-- where are we  
19 improving the spaces that they are in? I visited a  
20 couple. I'm not liking what I saw. I'm hoping, and  
21 especially the ones that supposed to have life skills  
22 in their building, I'm not seeing what I-- I visited  
23 and I'm not liking what I'm seeing. So, I'm hoping  
24 to see some improvement on that aspect. If our goal  
25 is to make sure they go through our system and having

2 the life skills they need to function as regular  
3 community members, we have to make sure they have all  
4 the tolls in their tool box.

5 CHIEF HAMMER: We completely agree that  
6 that is an important component to educating our  
7 student with disabilities, especially in District 75.  
8 I'm sorry to hear that you've seen some examples of  
9 areas where we need to work on. I'll be sure to  
10 follow up with you following the hearing to get some  
11 specifics on those schools and to get some team  
12 members out there to pay them a visit. I would say  
13 that I have seen some tremendous examples of schools  
14 delivering life skills curriculum. Specifically, I  
15 was at 277Q, the Riverview School, not too long ago  
16 where they have really outfitted their entire school  
17 community into learning labs, right? Where we have  
18 areas where students can learn to go to the laundry  
19 mat, for example. Students can learn, you know, all  
20 sorts of, you know, daily living skills across the  
21 entire school-- across the entire school community.  
22 And so, that work is growing within the district and  
23 we know that we have work to do.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Of course.

2 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Yeah, I just  
3 wanted to chime in really quickly, because I received  
4 an email today to from the CEC for District 28 about  
5 a resolution that touches on the topic that the Chair  
6 raised. I hope you look at the resolution. It just  
7 came out, but the resolution essentially is calling  
8 for you all [inaudible]-- is calling for an  
9 establishment of mandatory colocation agreements that  
10 are collaboratively developed with D75  
11 administrators, parent leaders, and staff to ensure  
12 equitable access to shared facilities, schedules, and  
13 schoolwide opportunities, creating a standardized  
14 colocation framework, appointing a dedicated  
15 colocation liaison, providing mandatory inclusion and  
16 disability awareness training for all school-based  
17 staff, ensuring parity in school leadership  
18 structures, adult and remedy facilities disparities  
19 in collocated schools to guarantee that D75 student  
20 have equal access. And then, elevate the voices of  
21 D75 families and students in collocated settings by  
22 creating inclusive feedback mechanisms and requiring  
23 meaningful parent engagement across all school  
24 communities. So, clearly, it is an issue like on the  
25 grounds, and it just is very befitting that I got

2 this email about this resolution specifically on D75  
3 issues in District 28.

4 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: I Hear  
5 you on that. I would just say that, you know,  
6 everything that I heard in that resolution is  
7 absolutely our expectation for colocation and  
8 principals working together. And so, you know,  
9 obviously we will support the District 28 community  
10 in implementing that resolution and those  
11 recommendations. I just want to very quickly, you  
12 know, as we bring up District 28-- I've spoken a lot  
13 about specialized program expansion, right, but  
14 there's a piece of this work that we're very excited  
15 to expand upon, right? It's taking the best pieces  
16 of our autism programing, the training, right,  
17 creating inclusive learning conditions, strengthening  
18 communication between teachers and families, teaching  
19 social skills and behavior support, adapting  
20 instruction-- it's taking all those pieces that make  
21 our specialized programs, you know, special and it's  
22 how do we train full districts in implementing these  
23 strategies? And so this fall, we're going to be  
24 rolling out a new initiative. It's called Inclusion  
25 Innovators where we're going to be partnering with

2 superintendents that have really come forward and  
3 said, you know, I want to identify a team member on  
4 my district team who's going to, you know, become an  
5 autism expert. I'm going to offer access to the  
6 Special Education Office, the Office of Autism to all  
7 of the schools in my district to provide this support  
8 over the course of the school year with coaching  
9 support. Proud to share that Superintendent Blake  
10 [sic] in District 28 has come forward as one of the  
11 superintendents that's going to be participating in  
12 this work. It'll also be happening in District One,  
13 District Nine, District 19, and District 22. And so  
14 we're going to have a lot of opportunity to work with  
15 28, District 28, in the upcoming school year, and  
16 just really grateful for Superintendent Blake's  
17 leadership.

18 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: I want to jump  
19 in really quickly on the colocation piece, because  
20 it's not only specific to D75, and let me just lead  
21 with this. None of your questions are an "I gotcha"  
22 for us or something eye-opening. We completely own  
23 the pockets in places and spaces of improvement that  
24 are needed across the system, and I don't only say  
25 that as a Chancellor. I say that as the mother of a



2 public school student. And one of the challenges  
3 with colocations is that sometimes you have multiple  
4 superintendents in one building, and so one of the  
5 things that we have started to do is make sure that  
6 we are speaking to all the superintendents in the  
7 building, because there was a time where maybe one  
8 superintendent would should up, but not all of them.  
9 Our expectation is that all the leaders, from the  
10 principals to the superintendents, are around the  
11 table. We also know that our space planning folks,  
12 they can go in and they can take a look at who's  
13 entitled to what in terms of footprints, but there is  
14 a nuance to this and that involves programming. And  
15 so there are a number of schools in the city where  
16 lunch starts at 9:15 in the morning. I don't know  
17 about you, but if it's not coffee, I'm not doing  
18 anything at 9:15 in the morning, let alone lunch. And  
19 so that is unacceptable for our children, right? We  
20 have a lot of work to do, but I do want to bring  
21 something up, and I'm actually glad, Chair, that you  
22 mentioned this resolution from CEC28 which I have not  
23 had the privilege of reading yet, because--

24 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: [interposing] It's  
25 new. I just got it this morning.

2 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: The CECs need  
3 to be empowered, and this is why we have established  
4 this pilot under Dr. Melendez and Dr. Rucks' [sp?]  
5 leadership where we are piloting best strategies to  
6 ensure that CECs and superintendents are working  
7 collaboratively so that these things can be escalated  
8 and addressed before it has to get to this point. So,  
9 stay tuned. The last thing I'll say about that is,  
10 I'm visiting SLTs myself. Why? School Leadership  
11 Teams are a very important part of all of this  
12 process, and we don't talk enough about them. And so  
13 that's something that Dr. Melendez and I, as we do  
14 our road show around the City, we are meeting with  
15 School Leadership Teams first of all to make sure  
16 that they're functioning. second of all, to make  
17 sure that they are at the table to speak about space  
18 planning issues and equitable programming around  
19 shared spaces, particularly for our D75 students, and  
20 then how do we activate on a plan that is fair for  
21 all parties involved.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you,  
23 Chancellor, and I do agree. We weren't trying to get  
24 you, we're just trying to connect the dots and see  
25 where the gaps are and where we could come in and get

2 them. I'd like to recognize Council Member Sanchez on  
3 Zoom and also Council Member Hanif, and I'd like to  
4 pass it along to Council Member Hudson.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Thank you so  
6 much, Chairs, and good afternoon, Chancellor and  
7 everyone. Chair Joseph addressed the need to  
8 implement practice over theory in her opening  
9 remarks. In School District 13 in my councilmatic  
10 district is doing exactly that. Just last week, I  
11 attended District 13's monthly anti-racist town hall  
12 which was a celebration of the district's growing  
13 commitment to using Restorative Justice practices in  
14 schools to build strong communities and to mitigate  
15 harm and to heal when harm happens, which I think is  
16 a perfect example of the type of work we should be  
17 fostering in all of our public schools. I'm really  
18 proud of the work Superintendent Meghan Dunn-- who  
19 just joined the dais here-- is doing especially in a  
20 school district that's facing rapid gentrification.  
21 And I do want to say that the pivotal work started  
22 under the leadership of Superintendent Kamar Samuels  
23 who's also here. I don't know Superintendent Alvarez  
24 was it? Is that-- okay. But you're in good company,  
25 obviously. So, I trust that you're doing just as

2 amazing work. I'm wondering if you can just talk a  
3 little bit more about the work public schools is  
4 doing to facilitate anti-racism principles in schools  
5 and to mitigate harm that may result as neighborhoods  
6 change? And while I recognize that creating a more  
7 equitable school system doesn't necessarily have a  
8 one-size-fits-all solution, I'm curious to know if  
9 there are any systemwide efforts to further the work  
10 of Districts 15, 13, and Three which you referenced  
11 in your testimony. And then after, I have one other  
12 question. Thank you.

13 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Thank you so  
14 much, Council Member. And yes, this is why our  
15 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Team is very, very  
16 important and that specific training that works with  
17 our superintendents to craft a professional learning  
18 plan that is specific to their community needs. Some  
19 community-- some districts are more advanced in this  
20 work than others. And so it's-- at that point, it  
21 becomes a capacity building model, right? Making  
22 sure that the leaders, although their core values are  
23 reflected in some of their plans, their building  
24 capacity and people from teachers to school aids, to  
25 parent leaders that share those same core values. And

2 so that's one model, right? But then there's some  
3 communities that the changing of the mindset needs a  
4 lot more intentional work, and so that's why our  
5 central team gets deployed into the superintendency  
6 [sic] to work in concert with the superintendent,  
7 identify the needs, and then activate. The  
8 superintendents who are here with us today, you know,  
9 this is-- this work is natural to them. I had the  
10 privilege of working with Superintendent Alvarez when  
11 we were in the Bronx. As a matter of fact, he  
12 mentored me, and so you know, we have amazing  
13 leaders, but what we know is that communities change.  
14 Communities are dynamic, and so those needs  
15 assessment and paying attention to the needs of the  
16 community and then responding with the appropriate  
17 professional learning and support for the community  
18 is important. So that's one piece, and then I'd  
19 really love for our superintendents to have an  
20 opportunity which is going to shut me up, and then  
21 we'll get to hear directly from our great leaders.

22 SUPERINTENDENT DUNN: Alright. Thank you  
23 so much. Hi, Council Member Hudson and thank you so  
24 much to the Chairs for having us here today. I really  
25 want to underscore what you said, Chair Joseph, about

2 the importance of really thinking about what is the  
3 theory and what is the practice, and how are we  
4 putting these two things together? One of the things  
5 that we were able to do in District 13, actually back  
6 when I was Deputy Superintendent and Kamar was  
7 Superintendent, was we were able to get rid of  
8 screens in all of our middle schools so that every  
9 student has access to any middle school in District  
10 13. That's the policy piece. The hearts and minds  
11 pieces-- we meet every month with all members of the  
12 District 13 community. We ground our work in the  
13 five Rs for real integration. We make sure that  
14 we're supporting the entire community of 8,500  
15 families in entering in with the same understanding  
16 that we're entering in at the leadership level. I  
17 think when the superintendency, as the Chancellor  
18 also touched on, it's my responsibility, our  
19 responsibility to look at the opportunities,  
20 programs, that are being offered through central and  
21 really seeing how does that fit into my local  
22 context. What are the things that my community  
23 needs, and how do I make sure that those fit into my  
24 vision as a superintendent. My district team has  
25 participated in the DEIB program as part of the Space

2 Planning Team, which is an opportunity for me to  
3 build their capacity, and when they're going out to  
4 schools and really thinking about how are we both  
5 marrying this idea of here's the policy, here's the  
6 intellectual piece, and here's what it looks like on  
7 the ground. Even the work of the Hidden Voices  
8 curriculum, the Black Studies curriculum, we're doing  
9 a lot of work within the district saying here are the  
10 resources and the supports that central's providing  
11 to us. We need to actualize them. We were able to  
12 pilot the Black Studies curriculum in District 13  
13 where 50 of our teachers went to the Birk [sic]  
14 Conference at TC a couple of weeks ago, volunteer as  
15 an opportunity, because that was the clerical day.  
16 But they volunteered to go, and that's a huge chance  
17 or them to say I want to continue my professional  
18 learning, because this is really important to me and  
19 really important to my community.

20 SUPERINTENDENT SAMUELS: Thank you. Hi,  
21 everyone. Shout out to Council Member Brewer as well  
22 as Council Member Hudson who I've worked with very,  
23 very closely. Following up on the piece about the  
24 Black Studies curriculum, yes, the District Three  
25 teachers presented at that conference, because it's

2 important to recognize that this is not just about  
3 putting bodies in the same school or in the same  
4 classes. This is about making sure that when that  
5 happens folks have the tools that are necessary to  
6 really ensure that all students are achieving at very  
7 high levels. And so, what we've done is through our  
8 work with the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and  
9 Belonging Team that the Chancellor mentioned earlier,  
10 is that we have also now trained ourselves in  
11 courageous conversations at the district level. So,  
12 all of my team is trained in courageous conversations  
13 at a practitioner level, and now I'm being trained at  
14 the facilitator level so that when we go to  
15 communities we are having real conversation and we  
16 can make sure that in a polarized society folks don't  
17 go to either end and the conversation stops. It's  
18 going to be important that we keep communities  
19 engaged throughout this entire process. We did this  
20 year in Harlem with our Harlem Working Group, and we  
21 came to a very robust proposal that actually  
22 addresses every single piece that you talked about  
23 before. We moved-- we re-sited a District 75 program  
24 to a more accessible building. We simultaneously re-  
25 sited one of our strongest middle schools to expand



2 it to being an IB high school. We also worked with  
3 the community to ensure that we are on the pathway to  
4 a sustainable elementary school through that process.  
5 So, this is not just a situation where we're saying,  
6 okay, let's rezone-- and we also, as a part of that,  
7 had a rezoning, right? So, all of the levers that  
8 we're continuing to talk about they don't work in  
9 isolation. They work together. CRSE programs work  
10 together when you actually get students in the-- of  
11 the diverse-- diverse students in the right space.  
12 And then teachers have to be trained not just  
13 teaches, but we are not as a society really ready for  
14 some of the conversations, and so the good news is  
15 there have been no time before where there's so many  
16 tools to actually help us to have those  
17 conversations. We focus on the polarization, but we  
18 should also focus on very real tools that we can use  
19 to keep communities together. And that's what we're  
20 doing in D3.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And how are you  
22 using those tools? And how are families engaged?  
23 How do you get families engaged? That's very  
24 important. We keep--

2 SUPERINTENDENT SAMUELS: [interposing]

3 Absolutely. So, we have Harlem Working Group which  
4 is comprised of parent coordinators, families, and as  
5 well as the principal, and we meet every month and we  
6 discuss data. We discuss all of the things that  
7 people want to see. We've been doing that in D3  
8 since June 2023. And so, we meet every single month,  
9 and that's where the proposals come from. And that's  
10 why they're great, because-- and that's why they're  
11 so robust, because they come from community  
12 conversations and community-- so when they get to a  
13 point where I need technical assistance, I call on my  
14 colleagues from the Office of District Planning. I  
15 call on my colleagues from FACE [sic]. I call on my  
16 colleagues from the Office of Enrollment, but that is  
17 generated every month from community conversations  
18 with all our six schools. In that particular case,  
19 in Harlem. I know we've had-- we have three-- we  
20 have two other working groups that are now beginning  
21 to have the same conversations throughout our  
22 district. So, the parent conversation is central to  
23 what we do.

24 SUPERINTENDENT DUNN: During our monthly  
25 town hall series, we really consider them family

2 opportunities. One of the things that we've moved  
3 towards is we're having middle school students  
4 participate with their families. So, this past  
5 month, actually in May, Minnie G. Brown [sp?] who is  
6 one of the original Little Rock Nine, attended our  
7 virtual series and was interviewed by middle  
8 schoolers in District 13, and it was a real chance to  
9 have a cross-generational conversation around what  
10 does integration mean for schools, like what are our  
11 lived experiences and how do these show up in our  
12 district?

13 SUPERINTENDENT ALVAREZ: So, Chair  
14 Joseph, hi. How are you? And all committee members-  
15 - just to sum this all up, it's really about  
16 community engagement and how we foster community  
17 engagement and the process of what we do as a system.  
18 So when we're talking about CRSE and talking about  
19 the work, all the work is through the funneling or  
20 the channel of the community itself and where the  
21 community is. So, in District 15 we use the PAR  
22 process which is the Participatory Action Research.  
23 We started off in our neighborhoods, Red Hook and  
24 Sunset Park which are our marginalized communities in  
25 District 15, and we started with a group of parents

2 who work independently with Maddie Fox [sp?] who's  
3 someone who we utilize as a resource to support  
4 helping to move the work around understanding the  
5 community, understanding its history and then  
6 understanding how do we move forward. In the  
7 conjunction of that, we develop our Youth and Adult  
8 Congresses which is a group of parents on the Adult  
9 Congress and Youth Congress so that we're fostering  
10 student voice, choice, and agency, and advocacy from  
11 our community. The decisions around rezoning,  
12 mergers, programs being added in our district, all  
13 that is inclusive of the decision-making that parents  
14 come to. So, When John Hammer spoke a little bit  
15 earlier and was talking about the inclusive schools,  
16 958 and-- which is Sunset Park, it's an inclusive  
17 school that has an AIMS program. That came about  
18 through the PAR process in Sunset Park where the  
19 community said we need this, we want this. And  
20 through the leadership of our central offices have  
21 provided us the supports that actually have those  
22 programs happen in our district. It's flourishing.  
23 Everyone wants it. In Red Hook, having the ACES  
24 program that actually at PS15 which created more  
25 access to special ed services in the particular

2 community. Recognizing that sometimes in some cases,  
3 some community members don't want to leave their  
4 neighborhood. They just want more services or more  
5 quality structures. And at the superintendent's  
6 level, we've been able to do that through the process  
7 of community engagement. I know you talked earlier  
8 about the CECs. Heavily involved with the CECs  
9 walking through schools, figuring out which schools  
10 needed accessibility, which schools need elevators,  
11 which schools need more services. Adding schools  
12 sooner, for example. We have 428 which we opened a  
13 year sooner as a result of the Sunset Park PAR  
14 process saying hey, we want our middle school and we  
15 want it sooner. And by the way, we also want the  
16 Horizon program for middle school. I'm happy to say  
17 that we were just awarded that funding to be able to  
18 have the Horizon program for middle school in our  
19 Sunet Park community. And so it's all about the  
20 consistent engagement. In some cases, our  
21 communities will say what you want is not what we  
22 want, and so we try to figure out other ways to  
23 address the needs of the community, because our  
24 priority is always going to be parental choice.

2 SUPERINTENDENT SAMUELS: And just finally  
3 on this, if-- finally on this, I think deep community  
4 engagement is required especially in a district like  
5 mine. We have the Upper West Side as well as Harlem,  
6 and I think it's important because we have to figure  
7 out where interest converge. Everyone wants to be in  
8 a well-resourced great school and the question is a  
9 little bit how we get there, and we have to stay  
10 engaged, and this is what I do with Council Member  
11 Brewer all the time with our community. It cannot  
12 happen without that.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Chairs? Over  
14 here, sorry. I did have another question.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Go ahead.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Okay. My time  
17 was taken up by the answer. I want to note-- not by  
18 the question, but by the answer.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: She's getting her  
20 time back.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: But we  
22 appreciate, you know, all of the information and  
23 those are the types of answers that we are in fact  
24 looking for, especially being on the record. But,  
25 given today's topic and the recent decision from the

2 Supreme Court to rule against the safety and  
3 livelihood of trans youth as well as the Trump  
4 administration's decision to cut all funding for  
5 LGBTQ+ suicide prevention services, what is New York  
6 City Public Schools doing to affirm the existence and  
7 needs of trans and gender non-conforming students,  
8 specifically-- and the LGBTQIA+ student body more  
9 broadly? And thank you, Chairs.

10 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: We have  
11 continued to and will always support our LGBTQIA+  
12 community. In fact, when the Executive Orders came  
13 out, the first thing we did just like we did with  
14 immigration was have our legal team analyze and see  
15 what were the implications for us. Thanks to us  
16 living in this state, there are no implications for  
17 us. We continue to protect every single student who  
18 walks through our buildings. Not only do we protect  
19 them, we celebrate them. Our work with our GSAs, our  
20 celebrations for our students, our strategic pairing  
21 of social workers and communities to make sure that  
22 they are supporting young people in these very, very  
23 difficult times, as long as-- as well as central-wide  
24 messaging to tell young people from all walks of  
25 life, you are protected, you are seen, you are

2 valued, and we are here with you. We just recently  
3 held a celebration for our LGBTQ+ community at Sweed  
4 [sic] where we heard from a number of students. We  
5 heard [inaudible] from a number of staff members. We  
6 also celebrated them at Yankee Stadium and their  
7 acceptance of scholarships after they wrote their  
8 essays talking about their journey, and one of the  
9 things that the team and I spoke about is how young  
10 people-- we talk so much about the macro level and  
11 everything going on at the federal level, but what we  
12 still have to remember is that there are young people  
13 who are not being accepted and seen by their  
14 families. And so in many cases, we are their  
15 families. So, we're also talking about what further  
16 supports can we provide to those specific young  
17 people whose families have not accepted their sexual  
18 identity, and that is something that we continue to  
19 do. In terms of the federal funding, this is why  
20 state funding is so important, because we know that  
21 it is a part of our budget, right, the federal  
22 funding, but it's a much smaller portion than our  
23 state funding. And so, this is why we continue to  
24 tell the state we need you to show up as big of a way  
25 as you possibly can, because the city has shown up in



2 a very, very huge way. And so, it is what it is at  
3 this point, but that doesn't mean that we are going  
4 to stop doing all the things that we've done and that  
5 we are going to do better.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Thank you so  
7 much, and thank you again, Chairs.

8 SUPERINTENDENT DUNN: Can I add in two  
9 quick--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: [interposing]  
11 Yeah, please.

12 SUPERINTENDENT DUNN: So, sorry. I just  
13 wanted to also say that in District 13, our CEC under  
14 the leadership of Cynthia McKnight [sp?] was the  
15 first CEC to pass the trans-affirming resolution  
16 across the entire city, and it's something that we're  
17 incredibly proud of in District 13. We also run  
18 teacher training. They're called Teach Fabulous for  
19 all educators in District 13, and I have partnered  
20 with PFLAG [sic] actually to run parent groups for  
21 parents of gender-expansive youth just to come and  
22 be. It's not about coming to fight or advocate. It's  
23 a chance for parents to come and say what do you need  
24 as parents. What are ways that we can support you ?

2 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Thank you so  
3 much.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And that's why it  
5 was so important for this council to fund the LGBTQ+  
6 curriculum along with-- thank you, Council Member  
7 Hudson, for being a partner on this work. That's why  
8 it was so important for us to fund that. One quick  
9 question on Black Studies-- we talked a lot about  
10 that. Is there an implementation and expansion of  
11 the curriculum? Tell me a little bit about that.

12 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Absolutely. As  
13 a matter of fact, Doctor Pate and I have been working  
14 on that very closely. Dr. Pate, I don't know if you  
15 want to join us and talk about that great work.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: She's already  
17 standing. She's a pro at this now.

18 UNIDENTIFIED: Oh, this is the other Dr.  
19 Pate.

20 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: They already  
21 know. Chair, they listen. They see you coming.  
22 Before I pass it over to Dr. Pate-- she and I have  
23 actually been working on this directly to talk about  
24 the specific expansion across certain districts and  
25 making sure that this isn't just something that lives

2 in districts where superintendents stood up and say  
3 hey, I want to do this. So now we're also picking  
4 some of the districts where we want to see expansion.  
5 Dr. Pate?

6 DR. PATE: Yeah, so super excited about  
7 this. We are gearing up to go citywide with the  
8 Black Studies curriculum across the whole 45  
9 districts, and superintendents are really going to be  
10 taking a lead in making sure that what the Black  
11 studies curriculum rollout looks like is unique to  
12 their district and their needs. And what we've  
13 learned over time is that there is no one-size-fits-  
14 best for every district or any district, because they  
15 are all unique. So, we've really asked  
16 superintendents to take the charge with this.  
17 They're going to be engaging their communities and  
18 figuring out what is needed and what teachers will  
19 need. We are building in capacity-building  
20 opportunities for professional development, family  
21 opportunities to shift from parent and family  
22 engagement to family empowerment which looks really,  
23 really different. And finally, the thing that is-- I  
24 feel most exciting is the crosswalks that we're doing  
25 between civics and also our social studies passport

2 work. So, more to come on that, but it's right on the  
3 hills of it. I just had a meeting with Michelle the  
4 other day who is my partner in crime in this, and we  
5 are working to make sure that we are up and running.  
6 Thanks for the question.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Well, thank you for  
8 that. How many schools are currently using the  
9 curriculum?

10 DR. PATE: So, we have over 300+ schools.  
11 We have a phased-in approach, and we've completed the  
12 phase one. The spear headers of that have been  
13 Superintendent Sean Davenport, his entire district,  
14 in addition District 29. We have some work going on  
15 in Queens with Superintendent Van-Ess. There's  
16 Kamar. There's Superintendent Meghan. So, there's  
17 tons of superintendents who were a part of that phase  
18 one, but we learned from them and now we know better  
19 what to do to ensure a really successful transition  
20 across the City in this upcoming school year. So  
21 super excited about that. More to come.

22 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: The other piece  
23 of it, Chair, just to add to this, is that we had  
24 also released Global African Diaspora as part of  
25 Hidden Voices, and I think that there some confusion

2 initially when that was rolled out. I think folks  
3 were talking about Hidden Voices GAD as the Black  
4 Studies curriculum, and they are two distinct things  
5 which is also the case-- we just released Hidden  
6 Voices Latin A edition, but there is-- thanks to the  
7 generosity of the Council-- we have a Black Studies  
8 curriculum, as well as a Latin A curriculum  
9 forthcoming. But what I will say is that the  
10 uniqueness of the Hidden Voices curricular resource  
11 which is why we don't call it a curriculum, but as a  
12 curricular resource is that it helps integrate the  
13 relative content into the standardize passport  
14 curriculum that is seen across our schools. So,  
15 we're doubling down on this, because we're making  
16 sure that Black Studies is alive and well in our  
17 standard social studies curriculum and that there is  
18 also a Black Studies curriculum to go deeper and even  
19 have an isolated course that you can offer at a high  
20 school or a middle school in addition to your regular  
21 social studies class which is really important.

22 DR. PATE: And I would just a final note  
23 that we have made the curriculum public for all of  
24 our teachers to have early access online. So, it's  
25 already out there. Teachers have already began to

2 look at it and think about creative ways to implement  
3 it, and now I think is-- the next step for us is  
4 really doubling down on greater exposure and also the  
5 capacity-building opportunities for our teachers and  
6 building leaders.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Will there be  
8 opportunities for PDs? Are we engaging  
9 administrators as well? Because sometimes we come  
10 out with new curriculums and we don't show it to the  
11 administrator. They either pay for it or they carry  
12 it. They put it in the classroom and they walk away.  
13 How are we engaging administrators in this  
14 conversation?

15 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Every single  
16 school that has been engaged around Black Studies  
17 curriculum, the principal has been part of that  
18 engagement process. As a matter of fact, when there  
19 are events, we see the principals just as much as we  
20 see the teachers. So, they're very committed to this  
21 work.

22 DR. PATE: And the curriculum is free,  
23 so.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I like-- you can  
25 stay there. What steps are New York City public

2 schools taking to ensure that transfer student and  
3 student over the age of 21 have equitable access to  
4 diverse and inclusive school settings?

5 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: We've done a lot  
6 of work in the D79 and transfer school space. this  
7 also starts with us making sure that the  
8 superintendencies are talking to each other, that  
9 bridge from high school to the transfer schools is  
10 super important. And so Superintendent Esperance,  
11 Superintendent John Sullivan, their conversations  
12 with the high school superintendents have been very  
13 important. I've visited a number of the schools. As  
14 a matter of fact, my first day as Chancellor I  
15 visited a D79 school and I spoke with the students,  
16 and they had a lot of concerns. One of their concerns  
17 was around space. one of their concerns was around  
18 traveling. They said, you know, this is such a great  
19 program. We feel at home, but you know, we have to  
20 go to all these different spaces. It's challenging,  
21 and just when we're getting comfortable, you know,  
22 we're-- you know, space isn't available for us. So  
23 we're working really closely with the superintendents  
24 to make sure that we're addressing those concerns,  
25 and that we're continuing the conversation with them.

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What about students  
3 in transfer schools that have IEPs? What kind of  
4 support are they getting? Sometimes I hear from  
5 principals that they're not getting the support they  
6 need. So, we would really love to see that part in  
7 meeting their needs, and also our bilingual students  
8 who end up in transfer schools, how are we supporting  
9 those student?

10 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Well, you know,  
11 Chair one of their things that I know you know well  
12 is that the IEP has to be absolutely correct and  
13 finalized before these young people enter into the  
14 transfer schools or into an alternative school,  
15 right? We need to make sure that those evaluations  
16 are done and that IEPs are written well. And here's  
17 John coming on up. But-- oh, and Brenda. Sorry,  
18 John, I thought that was you. You guys look so much  
19 alike.

20 CHIEF HAMMER: Yeah, the Chancellor's  
21 absolutely right. I mean part of this is ensuring  
22 that the IEPs are well-developed and then we're  
23 implementing services for students in District 79  
24 settings just as we would do in every other school.  
25 It's definitely work that we've been doing pretty



2 deeply in P2G, and it's work that we have to continue  
3 to strengthen and approve on. So, I appreciate you  
4 bringing that up. Our Chief of Multilingual Learners,  
5 Brenda Garcia, is here as well. She can talk a little  
6 bit about bilingual support.

7 CHIEF GARCIA: Good afternoon, Chair  
8 Joseph. Thank you for your advocacy for multilingual  
9 learners over the years. We have partnered over the  
10 years with Superintendent Sullivan, specifically. A  
11 few years ago we launched a true effort to increase  
12 bilingual transfer schools, and that work has  
13 continued. We have-- from the Office of Multilingual  
14 Learners-- provided funding to Superintendent  
15 Sullivan who's been partnering very closely with  
16 Superintendent Esperance in District 79 on ensuring  
17 that they're bringing the best practices and  
18 expanding them across all schools. So, they've been  
19 partnering specifically with the Internationals  
20 Network and doing a lot of professional learning in  
21 that area, and we plan to continue to support that  
22 work. In addition, we have been advocating with the  
23 state in terms of expanding GED availability in  
24 languages beyond Spanish which we know is a real  
25 need. And so we've had conversations collaboratively

2 with the Office of Bilingual Education and World  
3 Languages at the state, and Superintendent Esperance.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: That was going to be  
5 one of my follow-up questions, and having the  
6 opportunity to have GED programming in different  
7 languages. One of the biggest requests I had  
8 especially was around having the GED in French. So  
9 that was very important. Transfer schools, I know  
10 advocates have been asking for one in Brooklyn. We  
11 don't have one in Brooklyn. Bilingual--

12 CHIEF GARCIA: [interposing] We can  
13 certainly look at the data and look at what  
14 supporting Superintendent Sullivan and expanding that  
15 work in Brooklyn would look like.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. I will  
17 come back, and now I'm going to pass it over to  
18 Council Member Brewer.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very  
20 much. Just like others, PFLAG is fabulous and I  
21 think I've told you, Chancellor, District 79, I'm  
22 working with a lot of the African immigrants. They  
23 are fabulous at District 79. The reason that Kamar  
24 Samuels, one reason he's so successful, is of course  
25 he offers food at his events and it is not plant-

1 based. So people eat it. I just want to make that  
2 clear. Also, he has great-- I mean, just had a  
3 phenomenal robotics program and a phenomenal civics  
4 program, bringing people together. There was one kid  
5 named Max, he was better than Abraham Lincoln in terms  
6 of what he had to say. So, it's just-- that works.  
7 It really works. So, I have a couple of questions.  
8 First of all, in terms of-- I'm a supporter of GMT  
9 [sic]. Not everybody is, but I am. And I wanted to  
10 know from your perspective, in order to increase  
11 admissions for communities of color, I think the  
12 citywide admission test for GMT was replaced with a  
13 lottery system in 2021, and then there was an  
14 expansion of seats. So, I didn't know if these  
15 efforts have increased admissions of communities of  
16 color, and can you share eh data on that issue? The  
17 reason I say that is, I'm obviously a big supporter  
18 of Anderson, and they are not ecstatic about this new  
19 program. They felt like before they could make the  
20 community more diverse. I would love to see more GMT,  
21 and I'd love to have it much more diverse. There are  
22 so many kids of that 99.9 percent in our city, and I  
23 believe they should get this opportunity. But how do  
24 we make them more diverse?  
25

2 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Thank you,  
3 Council Member, and I'll make sure that next time you  
4 visit us at [inaudible] we don't give you veggies.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very  
6 much. Thank you.

7 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Well, I have to  
8 tell you. I have some slamming peppers from a school  
9 in Queens that they grew from their hydroponic lab  
10 the other day.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I like it from  
12 the hydroponics. That's fine. It's delicious. Just  
13 not from-- I love Chris, but not from him.

14 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: I got you. I  
15 got you. So, our philosophy remains that when it  
16 comes to GNT that we respond to the needs of the  
17 community. This is why it's so important for us. If  
18 the community overwhelmingly says they want more GNT  
19 programs, then we're going to work with the  
20 superintendent to expand them then. To discuss, you  
21 know, some of the nuances in enrollment, Trevonda is  
22 going to take it away.

23 CHIEF ENROLLMENT OFFICER KELLY: Sure.  
24 Thank you for your questions. So, we've seen an  
25 increase in Black and Latino students representation

1 since we eliminated the GNT exam. Office of Students  
2 in Higher Needs also increased by 42 percent that  
3 year compared to two years ago. The percent of Black  
4 kindergarteners in GNT programs rose from four  
5 percent in school year 20 to 2021 to 14 percent in 23  
6 to 24. And Hispanic representation as I mentioned  
7 also increased from eight percent to 16 percent over  
8 the same period. However, to your point, we have  
9 gotten feedback from educators and families who are  
10 not in love with the lottery system, and so we've  
11 been working across just trying to see exactly how we  
12 can make that balance. But that is the information  
13 that we do have.

14  
15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. The woman  
16 named Donna Smiley who just retired from Anderson,  
17 and she would be somebody to talk to because she, I  
18 think, is talking about this around the United States  
19 and would be helpful in trying to achieve our joint  
20 goals. One other quick question. In order to create  
21 better schools across the board, does magnet school  
22 work? In other words, if you have some kind of a  
23 draw to that school, is that something that helps in  
24 terms of quality and diversity? I don't know. I'm  
25 just asking.

2 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: I have to be  
3 honest with you, we have to do a deeper dive into the  
4 benefits of coming out of magnet schools. Right now,  
5 because we know that diversity and equity are a  
6 priority, we need to look at all options. So,  
7 looking forward to doing further research on that,  
8 particularly zoning in on those successes that our  
9 magnet schools have had, and then happy to speak with  
10 you further about what we find, and then coming up  
11 with an action plan.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, alright.  
13 And then we have Black, Latino, and Jewish  
14 curriculum? How the hell is he going to get all of  
15 those into the schools? You got three people-- I'm  
16 sure somebody else is going to pop up with their  
17 ideas, too. I can't wait.

18 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: It's New York  
19 City, Council Member. You know, it's--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] I  
21 know.

22 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Everybody gets  
23 a curriculum, and that's what we're all about.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I know. But I  
3 think it's not fair to you to try to figure it all  
4 out.

5 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: but you know,  
6 actually, it's a charge that I welcome.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

8 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Because I'd  
9 rather us at central help the schools figure that out  
10 so they're not negotiating based on their own  
11 preferences what's more important, and this is why  
12 the curricular resources with Hidden Voices are an  
13 excellent way to bring that content into the standard  
14 Passport curriculum. Now, in addition to that, there  
15 are-- there's also a Black Studies curriculum. There  
16 is a Latin A Studies curriculum coming as well as  
17 Jewish curriculum coming.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Right here.

19 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: But that said,  
20 those classes can be taught as standalone courses,  
21 and there's also a way to integrate some of those  
22 units of study into both your English classes and  
23 your social studies classes. So, there's a lot of  
24 flexibility, and our Teaching and Learning Department  
25

2 is very eager to work with schools on those  
3 integrations.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very  
5 much. And I also agree about accessible schools. I  
6 have many friends in wheelchairs and they actually  
7 have to meet with the, you know, children in the  
8 playground to be with the parents who-- you know, so  
9 I know you're working at it, but people forget that  
10 the parents also need accessible. Thank you very  
11 much.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. And we  
13 also have the AAPI curriculum coming out. It's a true  
14 reflection of what New York City is about, so they  
15 are needed in the space. So, who has final authority  
16 over drawing or redrawing school zone boundaries?  
17 Whose job is that, and how do you pick the districts  
18 you draw the lines? How do you pick it? What's the  
19 process? Walk me through it.

20 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Chair,  
21 before Yael talks about the process, you heard a  
22 little bit from superintendents. Hopefully we'll  
23 have time to hear more from them. The process that  
24 Superintendent Samuels described and Alvarez and Dunn  
25 described where these ideas come from community



2 conversations. That's-- the same is true with  
3 rezoning. And so, while Yael's team, and she'll talk  
4 about it-- in their constant conversation with  
5 superintendents might point out data and might look  
6 at how residential patterns are changing and flag it  
7 for them. What we do is support the superintendents  
8 as they're hearing that a community might be  
9 interested in rezoning, and then there is a very  
10 particular process. But Yael, why don't you go  
11 through that?

12 DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER KALBAN:  
13 Yeah, thank you, and thank you for the question,  
14 Chair Joseph. The rezoning process is inherently  
15 collaborative between NYCPS, CECs and communities.  
16 NYCPS works really closely with those CECs to develop  
17 the idea for the rezoning, the possible scenarios  
18 that a rezoning could look like, drawing maps,  
19 sharing data, digging into the implications,  
20 partnering hand-in-hand with CECs to do the community  
21 engagement. That looks like a million different  
22 things in every different community. SLT meetings,  
23 PTA meetings, CEC meetings, meetings with all of you  
24 when these are happening in your district, but also  
25 really localized efforts to make sure that both we

2 and the CECs are understanding the reality on the  
3 ground and what it's going to look like for the  
4 families who are impacted by the ultimate proposal.  
5 So, as you've heard from some of the superintendents  
6 and they can share a little bit more, that has looked  
7 like neighborhood walks, surveys of communities, and  
8 Participatory Action Research process that  
9 Superintendent Alvarez spoke to, and similar  
10 processes. Ultimately, our office, the Office of  
11 District Planning, does a lot of the heavy lifting  
12 around crunching data, drawing maps, engaging around  
13 those possible scenarios with the CECs and the  
14 impacted communities. Ultimately, we deliver a  
15 proposal to the CEC that the CEC has to approve. So,  
16 we cannot rezone without CEC approval. CECs cannot  
17 put forward or implement a rezoning without a  
18 proposal coming from NYCPS. So, it's really a very  
19 collaborative process. And just your earlier  
20 question about how we identify these opportunities,  
21 that is also very collaborative. I will say a lot of  
22 times it is triggered by a new building or an  
23 expansion on an existing building. So, when we have  
24 an opportunity to open a new zoned school or to  
25 expand a zoned school, those are sort of the very

2 obvious triggers for those conversations. Other  
3 times, it comes up through mergers or truncations or  
4 closures of zone schools that we work on, again, with  
5 superintendents and the communities, and then other  
6 times simply in our conversations in partnership  
7 within superintendents and CECs, we may identify  
8 opportunities to rezone across existing schools for  
9 one reason or another. But I'll turn it to the  
10 superintendent to speak a little bit more about what  
11 this looks like on the ground for them.

12 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Chair,  
13 did you want them to jump in now? You might have had  
14 follow-up questions on rezonings.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah, I was. I was  
16 going to ask how do you prioritize voices of  
17 marginalized communities in this process? Right? We  
18 have communities that are more engaged than the  
19 others. How do we engage that voice, and how many  
20 rezonings have you done so far. Anybody has the  
21 number?

22 DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER KALBAN:  
23 So, in the last 10 years, we have done 28 rezonings  
24 at the elementary level impacting 135 schools.

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Can you share that?  
3 Not now, but can you email that to us--

4 DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER KALBAN:  
5 [interposing] Yes, we'll follow up.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: the list of schools  
7 that you have done the rezoning.

8 DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER KALBAN:  
9 Absolutely.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And to my question,  
11 how are you elevating voices of marginalized  
12 communities in this process?

13 DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER KALBAN:  
14 Yeah, I think that's again, what the superintendents  
15 can speak to.

16 SUPERINTENDENT SAMUELS: Yeah. So,  
17 Yael's 28 rezonings. I've been responsible for two  
18 across two districts. In District 13 we started  
19 with-- as she said, it can be triggered by a merger  
20 of a school. So, when we merged [inaudible] 305, it  
21 triggered a rezoning of Bed-Stuy area, which meant  
22 that we had to engage the Bed-Stuy community about  
23 what we wanted to do, and we had several meetings  
24 with maps, with different options for what they  
25 needed to-- that what they wanted to think about.

2 And I want to say in all of these, these are not  
3 absent disagreements. These are not absent pushback,  
4 but what we do is to really make sure that we have  
5 the skillset to keep folks engaged so we can come to  
6 some real agreement around-- and in the District  
7 Three context that was more recent actually where we  
8 had this re-siting and merger that created an  
9 opportunity for us to have a rezoning conversation.  
10 That one, we, again-- it was in the context of our  
11 Harlem working group that we had been engaging in,  
12 and they had come up with the proposal to begin with.  
13 So we had-- so they had questions about what would  
14 this mean for the remaining schools and we had to get  
15 the Office of District Planning to work out our  
16 options there. We had --in District 13 the option  
17 was to keep pretty much similar rezoning. And  
18 District Three was actually quite different. We-- it  
19 led to a shared zone, so now all of our Harlem  
20 schools operate under the same zone, and that was  
21 voted on by our CEC unanimously after significant  
22 engagement.

23 SUPERINTENDENT ALVAREZ: The partnership  
24 have been with the CECs to start off with. But to  
25 your point around the marginalized communities in

2 District 15, that would be our Sunset Park, Red Hook,  
3 and Gowanus communities. They underwent the PAR  
4 process which we will submit an abridged version of  
5 the PAR process and what it entailed so that every  
6 member has on the community for your review. What we  
7 did there is really engage the communities, those  
8 particular communities specifically with the process  
9 of understanding the historical disparities in their  
10 communities, understanding from their perspective,  
11 but also the history that's gone way before them, and  
12 thinking about what was some possible recommendations  
13 and next steps. For example, one of the zonings, the  
14 CEC was able to vote on it from the recommendation  
15 that came from the report-- from the community that  
16 recommended certain things around sub-zoning within  
17 communities to ensure that there's more forms of  
18 integration which the CEC was able to buy into,  
19 again, all this about community engagement. On the  
20 opposite end, we're talking about when there's  
21 possibilities of mergers. So, for example, I  
22 recognize, for example, PS10 and 295 that was on the  
23 list that was discussed. In those particular cases  
24 we engaged those particular two schools around the  
25 possibility of merging into one school for the

2 purposes of integration and other things. What we  
3 came to find out is that's not what both communities  
4 wanted, but what we were able to get as a result of  
5 the conversations was agreement for the schools to  
6 work in partnership with professional development to  
7 work in partnership with PA, PTAs, from one school to  
8 the other collectively and collaboratively. And the  
9 goal is over time to find ways to get them to  
10 integrate so that over time they're actually thinking  
11 about more integration as we think about other things  
12 that we have to focus on in the future.

13 DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER KALBAN:

14 And if I could just add one more, one more point to  
15 drive this home. All of the engagements and  
16 community conversations that the superintendents have  
17 talked about, we've worked really hard over the last  
18 few years to more and more bring those conversations  
19 into the community. So we know that not everyone is  
20 going to come to every CEC meeting where information  
21 is being presented. We've been working really hard  
22 to not only present there with translations and  
23 interpretations and to make sure that word is getting  
24 out about this meetings, but going to tenants  
25 associations and impacted NYCHA housing projects,

2 going to pre-k centers in the area and to local CBO-  
3 run pre-k centers so that the families who would be  
4 most impacted by these initiatives are finding out  
5 before they show up to enroll in schools and didn't  
6 know what was happening. So appreciate working with  
7 these superintendents to--

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] Are we  
9 leaning also on the faith-based community as well?  
10 Because they play a huge role in how this go. But  
11 how do you evaluate whether existing school zone  
12 contribute to racial and socioeconomic segregation  
13 within those districts that you are rezoning? How  
14 are you looking at that?

15 SUPERINTENDENT SAMUELS: So, something to  
16 really point out here is when you isolate rezoning,  
17 quite frankly we've seen those situations not work.  
18 So, when we look at the rezoning of PS8 and 307 in my  
19 former district, District 13, when we look at the  
20 rezoning of the upper west side, rezoning by itself  
21 hasn't led to more integrated schools in those  
22 situations. Why? Because we still have parent  
23 choice. Schools are still funded by the number of  
24 students in them. So, if schools have space, they're  
25 going to accept the folks that apply. So, I think



2 it's important to think through this notion of  
3 rezoning as a singular lever. I think we have to  
4 think about it more holistically, because when we  
5 have-- in the recent past when we approached with  
6 only rezoning, we don't see schools become more  
7 integrated because of it, and I'm sure Yael can add  
8 more on that.

9 DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER KALBAN:

10 Yeah, I can speak a little bit more to some of the  
11 data that we're looking at. You know, and thank you  
12 for raising some of these questions and encouraging  
13 us to look a little bit differently at some of the  
14 data that we have gotten so used to working with.  
15 So, a couple of the analysis that we've been running  
16 and are continuing to dig into are looking at both  
17 how representative are our zoned elementary schools  
18 of the demographics of their zones and where do we  
19 see adjacent zones that have significantly different  
20 demographics within the resident population. So, I  
21 think overall we do see that most of our zoned  
22 elementary schools do represent their zones. They're  
23 not necessarily serving exclusively students from  
24 their zones, but nonetheless, we do see that by in  
25 large, you know, about 85 percent of our zoned

2 schools do reflect the demographics of the zones they  
3 serve. We have also been looking at close to 1,500  
4 pairs of adjacent elementary school zones within a  
5 given district, and what we found there is-- I think  
6 there are about five percent of them do show a pretty  
7 significant difference in the demographics zone to  
8 zone. As we look into them, you know, what we're  
9 finding is some of these are zoned that we have  
10 already touched or already engaged with and they're  
11 some incredibly complicated factors to tease apart  
12 when we think about who's going to these schools, why  
13 are they going to these schools, what does zoning  
14 have to do with it? We're also finding that in some  
15 of these instances there are real geographic barriers  
16 that families don't want to cross. And so I think  
17 this is where we come back to the notion of how do we  
18 bring great schools, great programs, and equitable  
19 access to those programs to families regardless of  
20 their zone, and make sure that they can access them  
21 closer to home.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Schools, great  
23 schools in every neighborhood, not just-- I've always  
24 said this as an educator and also as the Chair. It  
25 should be no matter what your zip code is, I'm

2 getting a quality education. My school building I  
3 walk into is not crumbling, and I visited school  
4 buildings that-- and when we talk about equity,  
5 that's also a space where we need to be on the  
6 equitable side. It's also school buildings.  
7 Schools-- some of the buildings I've been to I'm  
8 like, oh, my goodness. So, this is where we also  
9 have to step up and really invest in our school  
10 buildings when we talk about equity. But we also  
11 have to look at neighborhoods that are gentrifying at  
12 a rapid, rapid rate, and Brooklyn is one of those  
13 areas that is gentrifying at a fast pace. So  
14 therefore, we must also look at that data and see how  
15 we adjust and meet the needs of the students. When  
16 we talk about meeting the moment, this is it. Council  
17 Member Marmorato, it's your turn.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Thank you.

19 Can you just walk me through what the protocol is  
20 when a choking incident does take place on school  
21 grounds?

22 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: When a choking  
23 incident takes place, well, first of all, we assess  
24 the situation and make sure that someone who is  
25 trained in the Heimlich maneuver that they are-- that

2 they attend to the child immediately. We have school  
3 nurses. We sound the alarm, make sure that people  
4 are responding immediately. This is why we have  
5 trained professionals. It's incredibly important.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay, is there  
7 like a response team put together in each school?

8 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Uh-hm.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: And how many  
10 members are on that response team?

11 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Chief  
12 Rampersant, I know you were--

13 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: Do I need to get sworn  
14 in? I'm good? I swear. Yes, every one of our  
15 schools--

16 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG:  
17 Counsel, do you want to swear in--

18 UNIDENTIFIED: [inaudible] I'm sorry. I'm  
19 sorry. Yes.

20 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Chief  
21 Rampersant?

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Please raise your  
23 right hand? DO you swear to tell the truth, the  
24 whole truth and nothing but the truth and to respond  
25 honestly to Council Member questions?

2 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: Yes.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Go ahead.

4 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: Thank you. So, the  
5 question is what do in the case of a choking incident  
6 of a student? First and foremost, you should rest  
7 assure that every one of our schools has to do what  
8 is called a School Safety Plan. As part of that  
9 safety plan, we have to outline everybody who is CPR  
10 and AED trained. We cannot complete the plan until  
11 we do. If we have a young person who is in fact  
12 choking to the point of choking period, we have  
13 people who are trained to respond. The way by which  
14 we respond is over the PA system. We call a code  
15 blue, and then there's a response team that shows up.  
16 That could be the nurse. Usually our gym teachers--  
17 all of our Phys Ed teachers are certified AED as well  
18 as members-- some members of the building response  
19 team. They respond and provide aid. The amount of  
20 aid is determined by, you know, how severe--

21 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: [interposing]

22 Also our coaches. We have a number of coaches who  
23 are pedagogues who are not necessarily PE teachers,  
24 which allows for a contingency plan should somebody  
25 who is trained not be present in the building at that

2 time. There are other people in the building who can  
3 participate.

4 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: Our Phys Ed teams  
5 can't happen unless they're trained people on-- that  
6 are on record.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. It's  
8 interesting that you keep bringing up somebody that's  
9 trained in AED, because what is an AED machine. It's  
10 used after CPR is not actually working, and that was  
11 the point of my bill. I understand that the Heimlich  
12 maneuver is the first line of defense--

13 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: [interposing] Correct.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: medically  
15 across the board, and that if in certain cases or  
16 circumstances, this is a new device that can help,  
17 god forbid we're ever in a situation like that. So,  
18 this is why this is kind of little important to push  
19 this forward. What specific guidelines exist for  
20 handling choking emergencies involving students in  
21 wheelchairs or that have other physical or nonvisible  
22 disabilities?

23 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: Yeah, so wheelchairs,  
24 I mean-- I'm not sure that the certification is  
25 different. I know that they are held differently,

2 but all of our -- all of our D75 schools are  
3 following the same protocol in terms of the staff  
4 that are trained to provide those respective aids.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. And are  
6 there any implementation concerns that the Department  
7 of Education perceives with this legislation such as  
8 training requirements, legal liability, medical  
9 concerns, or cost of the device?

10 CHIEF RAMPERSANT: Not that I-- not that  
11 I know of, no.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. Thank  
13 you.

14 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: I have some  
15 follow-up questions on the wonderful work that the  
16 superintendents have been doing. How do we replicate  
17 this work across the system? And how do you  
18 prioritize-- is it based off of like a wonderful  
19 individual or is it based on your office determining  
20 which school districts should be prioritized for that  
21 type of work? Because it's really nice to hear that  
22 they like walked all these schools and looked at  
23 elevators. Like, I still have quite a few schools  
24 that are inaccessible. There's a school in  
25 particular I'm thinking about. Bloomberg put some

2 type of garden on their roof, but because they don't  
3 have an elevator it's just inoperable. So, would  
4 love to know one, how can you duplicate their work  
5 across the system, and then how do you prioritize  
6 which school districts get that level of intention?

7 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: We're  
8 very grateful to the three amazing superintendents  
9 who are here. We-- you'll have to trust us that we  
10 weren't cherry-picking, Chair. These are wonderful  
11 superintendents--

12 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: [interposing]  
13 That's what it feels like, because D29, D28 does not  
14 have that level of intention at all.

15 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Okay.  
16 The-- yeah, certainly, you know, as with any other  
17 human endeavor, skill level is always going to vary,  
18 but in terms of the charge that the Chancellor gives  
19 the superintendents, and I think they would all  
20 attest to this, it is to do fundamentally what you're  
21 hearing they're doing which is putting an ear to the  
22 ground, being very closely in touch, not just with  
23 the community generally, because they all have  
24 districts that are very large and diverse, but to  
25 every corner of the community, every school



2 community, every housing development, etcetera, that  
3 they and their teams are in constant contact. They  
4 are creating forums to have these conversations, and  
5 I will say, yes, if we have superintendents who  
6 aren't leaning into it as much as these  
7 superintendents, that's why we have central teams  
8 that are meeting with those superintendents providing  
9 data, asking them-- they have chiefs that are pushing  
10 them on these issues. What are we doing about this  
11 particular community that's been asking for  
12 additional programming to serve autistic students,  
13 etcetera, etcetera. So, the model is very much that  
14 both the bridge to the community is through the  
15 superintendent and their teams and the accountability  
16 for that. So-- it is at the superintendent level.  
17 So, they can also tell you I'm sure about some sweaty  
18 palm moments when some of their people are saying to  
19 the Chancellor, hey, we haven't heard back from the  
20 superintendent about this issue that we're really  
21 concerned about. That doesn't happen that often.

22 SUPERINTENDENT SAMUELS: I have to address  
23 a couple of things. Number one, CEC partnership and  
24 collaboration is critical to this piece, and so the  
25 Chancellor, we were one of the districts that piloted

2 the collaboration this year, and we looked really  
3 closely at our facilities, right? So, something you  
4 were talking about, facilities. All-- we have a  
5 report coming out analyzing all our BCAS [sic]  
6 reports, and that was something that the Chancellor  
7 really put forward. Now, with regards to other  
8 superintendents, I think we at the office, the  
9 Division of School Leadership, have a really great  
10 structure around collaboration. So, you mention the  
11 Districts 28 and 29. I now know those two  
12 superintendents way better over the last--

13 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: [interposing] Like,  
14 Dr. Vans [sic] is retiring.

15 SUPERINTENDENT SAMUELS: Yeah, and--

16 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: [interposing] So  
17 she's out.

18 SUPERINTENDENT SAMUELS: And the 28, the  
19 work--

20 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: [interposing] And  
21 Dr. Blake just got there.

22 SUPERINTENDENT SAMUELS: So, we  
23 collaborate with those two superintendents, Dr.  
24 Blake. The work-- he act-- we sat down to discuss  
25 the podcast you mentioned earlier, the School Colors

2 podcast. We talked about that podcast and how he can  
3 approach and listen to the work that's happening in  
4 his schools. And so we have-- we meet monthly to  
5 really think about concerns he-- had had other-- he  
6 had many different things that he was working on.  
7 Now, that's one thing that I know is on his mind,  
8 because we've talked about it.

9 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Yeah, I think my  
10 concern always is, of course, it's such a huge system  
11 and there's so many layers within the system, and I'm  
12 always trying to figure out how-- not that all  
13 communities and all school districts require or need  
14 the same things, because I also don't think it should  
15 be a one-size-fits-all. but I do think where you are  
16 piloting these really good programs, you've seen  
17 success within particular school districts, that  
18 there should be some type of concerted effort to  
19 really duplicate that, especially whatever best  
20 practice model you're assessing into other school  
21 districts, and I just-- I have not seen it in the  
22 school districts that are in my area, and I would  
23 endeavor to say if we polled a lot of people--  
24 because here's a good question. Do you think all  
25 school districts are doing what you're doing?

2 SUPERINTENDENT SAMUELS: I think the best  
3 practice is listening, right? So, I think--

4 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: [interposing] No,  
5 but that's the question. Like, do you think all  
6 school districts are operating at the same--

7 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: [interposing]  
8 No.

9 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Exactly.

10 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: They're not.

11 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you.

12 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: And so, if I  
13 may?

14 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Yeah.

15 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: The strategy is  
16 to make sure that we are strategically curating the  
17 best practices, but that we're also evaluating them  
18 as best practices. What I don't want is  
19 superintendents sharing best practices that have not  
20 been deemed to be a best practice by all of us--

21 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: [interposing]  
22 Absolutely. So, if you could share, like, your  
23 strategy, because that was like my original question.  
24 Lik, what is the strategy to-- at some point. I'm  
25 not saying you have to do it tomorrow, but even if

2 you do it like three years from now. What is the  
3 strategy? Or how are you thinking about how to scale  
4 this amazing work across the system?

5 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: So, that is the  
6 strategy. The strategy is by working with our team to  
7 identify best practices in myriad areas across the  
8 superintendencies in saying this superintendent is  
9 great in these instructional practices. This  
10 superintendent is great in working with his or her  
11 community. This superintendent is really great in  
12 working with their facilities folks, right? Because  
13 not everyone is great at everything. And so,  
14 identifying where are their pockets of success, and  
15 then we can host professional learning communities  
16 where superintendents are training each other and  
17 sharing-- like how did I get here, right? It's not  
18 only about the destination, it's about the journey.  
19 When I first inherited this district, I had these  
20 challenges. I did this needs assessment, etcetera,  
21 etcetera.

22 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Are you doing that  
23 work now, or you're saying that is the plan moving  
24 forward?

2 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: We have started  
3 that work which is why I launched a Superintendent  
4 and Principal Advisory Council. Prior to that we had  
5 a Principal Advisory Council, but I added  
6 superintendent so that we're identifying leaders at  
7 the school and district level. They fill out a  
8 survey around some of the pressing issues that  
9 plagued the districts in the schools, and now we're  
10 breaking them off into subcommittees so that way they  
11 can start leading that work over the summer, but it  
12 has started-- early stages, but it has started.

13 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Do you have any  
14 like goals or metrics around like how you plan to  
15 scale that? So, outside of the conversation, again,  
16 like in practice-- like, if I'm superintendent A, I  
17 do this great. I'm superintendent, B I do something  
18 else great. But maybe you want to merge. Maybe I  
19 take a little bit of what you're doing when-- I guess  
20 as like the Chancellor, do you have a timeline or  
21 goals around like when certain school districts would  
22 actually implement these best practices that you have  
23 deemed best practices?

24 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: So, I hate that  
25 I can't give you more specificity, but it depends on

2 the needs assessment of the district. Some needs are  
3 greater than others, and for me to sit here and say  
4 that the timeline is the same for every district  
5 would be hypocritical, and that's why the needs  
6 assessments have to start now as we close out this  
7 year and as we form these committees, so that way we  
8 can figure out what the appropriate goals and  
9 timelines are.

10 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Okay, thank you.  
11 Just some follow-up questions on zoning. What I took  
12 from the answers is that there's no uniform process.  
13 It seems like the process is based off of whatever  
14 collaboration in whatever area, which is great  
15 because that means we are attuning our efforts based  
16 off the needs of particular communities, but then I  
17 also am like not sure how to even properly evaluate  
18 what you're doing, because it doesn't seem like  
19 there's any benchmarks or criteria for how you even  
20 assess what the different recommendations are. So  
21 may-- I'm sure you might have it. I guess it just  
22 wasn't shared. So, if you do have that.

23 DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER KALBAN:  
24 Yes. So, there is a lot more structure that applies  
25 across the board that I'm happy to talk about. So,

2 when we work with the community in identifying  
3 opportunity to rezone or a need to rezone that may be  
4 triggered by a merger or a new building opening, that  
5 will house the zone school, we start by-- you know,  
6 it is more of an art than a science. So, there's a  
7 lot of conversation from the community, getting  
8 feedback and input from the CEC before we even start  
9 digging into data and drawing maps so we can  
10 understand which school should be involved. So, we  
11 look at a host of data including utilization rates,  
12 demographics, residential construction in the area.  
13 So, we get data from DCP, around housing starts, and  
14 projected residential growth. So, all of that gets  
15 factored in as we start to have these conversations  
16 with CECs, with principals, with school communities  
17 to understand how far should we be reaching, right?  
18 Sometimes a rezoning might be there's two adjacent  
19 zones. We move line a little bit, boom. Other times,  
20 there's a new school opening in one zone. We carve  
21 out a zone for it. We also pull in from surrounding  
22 zones to balance it out. So, essentially, what we  
23 have to do is figure out where can we draw lines that  
24 are practical for families that also result in the  
25 right number of students living in the zone. And so



2 to determine that, we look at historically how many  
3 kids who live in the zone go to a different school,  
4 how many-- you know, what has happened in the zone  
5 recently. I'm looking at all of these enrollment  
6 trends. So, it is a very iterative practice where we  
7 look at sort of a pretty defined set of data, go  
8 through it would CECs, school leadership teams,  
9 community members, draw maps, get feedback, redraw  
10 the maps, go back again. So, it kind of goes on and  
11 on like that until we have a map where CEC seems to  
12 be onboard. We're getting positive feedback from the  
13 community and we do feel that we're ready for a vote,  
14 and that's the point at which we submit an official  
15 proposal to the CEC. The CEC then has 45 days to  
16 vote on it, and once they vote on it, we can move  
17 head and implement it for the following school year  
18 typically.

19 SUPERINTENDENT SAMUELS: Adding onto--  
20 I'm so sorry. Adding on to what she said, the  
21 structure though is every single year we sit with--  
22 every superintendent in the City sits with the Office  
23 of District Planning and other departments throughout  
24 central, and they make-- they tell us, okay, these  
25 are the priorities of the chancellor. These are the

2 things we want to really look into. They give us  
3 vast amount of data to review, and then we look at  
4 our districts and sometimes talk to each other and  
5 come up with what we want to engage, and based on the  
6 priorities of the Chancellor, and we also have our  
7 DCEPs that we strategically actually look and try to  
8 set goals and play out through tis process as well.  
9 So, that's the structure that we work with.

10 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you. And  
11 I'm happy that you mentioned DCP. So, I actually  
12 have a neighborhood plan that I'm doing in Jamaica  
13 and the draft environmental impact statement does  
14 stipulate that there will be a need for increase in  
15 school seats. All the schools in that circumference  
16 are already at capacity, and so just wondering how  
17 you make those assessments, and are you thinking  
18 about planning now? We hope that the plan gets passe  
19 and comes to the Council in the fall, but how are you  
20 assessing that as another example? The Queens High  
21 School of Sciences is in that area. They also did a  
22 resolution, by the way. They want a new school.  
23 Should mention that, I know they're in my district,  
24 whatever. And then there-- for instance, there's a  
25 school that's being built on Hillside, and I know

2 there's been a lot of conversation about what's going  
3 to go there? Is there going to be an elementary  
4 school? Is going to be Queens High School of  
5 Science? I know they're petitioning for that. York  
6 Early College Academy which is another really good  
7 school is co-located in a middle school in my  
8 district. So, all of the schools that I just  
9 mentioned are all in the study map for the Jamaica  
10 neighborhood plan. So, I would love to-- if you have  
11 thoughts now, we can talk off-line, but would love to  
12 know in general how you make those assessments, when  
13 you make those assessments, and if you are thinking  
14 and planning about school seats in the Jamaica area.

15 DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER KALBAN:

16 Yeah, so we should definitely follow up. There's a  
17 lot to dig into here, and yeah, we're really excited  
18 about the Hillside building. It is high school  
19 capacity which is desperately needed in Queens and in  
20 this part of Queens in particular. We are in initial  
21 conversations with communities about how to best use  
22 that space as you just described. There are really  
23 a million different ways we could make excellent use  
24 of it. And so we want to make sure that as with  
25 rezonings we are hearing from communities, we are

2 weighing all the options, and coming out with an  
3 equitable outcome that best meets the needs of  
4 students and families in neighborhood rezonings like  
5 the one you're describing in Jamaica. So, we do,  
6 again, partner really closely not just with DCP, but  
7 also with the School Construction Authority. They  
8 obviously have a very large role in helping to figure  
9 out where those new school seats are going to go and  
10 what the timeline is. You know, it's a bit of a  
11 delicate dance as we try to assess when these housing  
12 units will be realized, when the residential growth  
13 will be realized and then when the necessary school  
14 seats come online. I know we're sort of having some  
15 similar conversations right now over in District 30  
16 around some new capacity coming online there, and  
17 figuring out how to both address projected housing  
18 growth and some existing overutilization within the  
19 capacity that we do have at the moment. So, we'll  
20 have continuing conversations, and we look forward to  
21 partnering with you on that.

22 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Yeah. I'm just  
23 again concerned because so many of the schools in  
24 that area are--

2 DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER KALBAN:

3 [interposing] Yeah.

4 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: currently at  
5 capacity, largely because of the migrant crisis that  
6 we had. So yeah, I'm just concerned about what's  
7 going to happen to those schools. And Dr. Pate-- not  
8 that Dr. Pate, but the other Dr. Pate is on the  
9 Community Advisory Council that I have, and it's been  
10 helpful even though she's not a D28 superintendent,  
11 for her to talk about like what this means for the  
12 school, but yes, would love to talk more about that.  
13 You specifically mentioned that there were incredibly  
14 complicated factors around how you make certain  
15 determinations about why certain students are going  
16 to certain schools or certain school districts. Can  
17 you just talk a little bit more about what those  
18 incredibly complicated factors are?

19 DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER KALBAN:

20 Yeah, I mean, family choice is nuanced and  
21 individual. So, we obviously can't speak to the  
22 choices that individual families make, but I do think  
23 that, you know, we see families who are looking for a  
24 specific type of school in their neighborhood, and it  
25 may not exist, and so they choose to travel. We see

2 some families who believe deeply in being able to go  
3 to their neighborhood school, and they want to stay  
4 there, you know, regardless of whether it's the most  
5 integrated option or has sort of everything that a  
6 school a mile or two away can offer. So, I think,  
7 you know, a place where we really saw this come up  
8 especially prominently was in the District 15  
9 rezoning in Red Hook where we did the PAR process,  
10 you know, transparently. We started that rezoning  
11 without the partnership of Maddie Fox and the PAR  
12 team, and it was-- it was tough, right? There were  
13 so many neighborhoods, so many communities. Everyone  
14 wanted something else, and we have so many goals of  
15 that rezoning. So, we were trying to rezone students  
16 to fill new construction at one of our schools. We  
17 were trying to alleviate overcrowding at a couple of  
18 the schools in the area, and we were trying to  
19 integrate across zones, because they are quite  
20 different from each other in this area. You know,  
21 sort of Red Hook Carroll Gardens, how do you tackle  
22 that all in one project? As we dug in deeper it  
23 became abundantly clear and we heard clear feedback  
24 from those communities that like we need a different  
25 process. We slowed down. We brought in the PAR

1 team. Again, that was all done in partnership with  
2 the CECs who had a voice in who that partner  
3 organization was going to be and what that process  
4 was going to look like. They took time. They used  
5 the resources that they had, community members who  
6 wanted to be a part of this. It was a representative  
7 group, and I see you now all have the report in front  
8 of you for some light reading when this done. They  
9 went out and they spoke to everybody and they had  
10 focus groups and interviews and conversations, and  
11 they came back with a really robust set of  
12 recommendations, and what we heard was not, you know,  
13 redraw the zone lines to create integrated schools.  
14 What we heard was give us that option, but also give  
15 us the option of staying close to home. Don't make  
16 us cross the BQE. Don't make us go to schools don't  
17 feel like they are part of our community, and don't,  
18 you know, sort of unweave the fabric of our community  
19 by drastically changing it in the name of this value  
20 if we haven't had a say in it. And what we ended up  
21 doing there was actually quite interesting and  
22 extensive. We drew zone lines that kind of aimed to  
23 archive all of this as much as possible, but our  
24 schools where drawing diverse zones was incredibly  
25

2 challenging just because of residential segregation.  
3 We drew those lines in a way that allowed us to keep  
4 seats for out-of-zone student who could be admitted  
5 using the diversity and admissions initiative that  
6 we've talked about a few times today. So, in that  
7 way, we were able to say to families in Red Hook,  
8 you can stay zoned to a Red Hook school, but you also  
9 have priority to these other schools through DIA if  
10 you want to exercise that option. And then we also  
11 actually completely reconfigured the Red Hook  
12 neighborhood school, PS676, from an elementary school  
13 that was just historically underenrolled and really  
14 struggling in partnership with the community, and the  
15 PAR process actually converted it into a middle  
16 school. It has become-- it has multiplied in size.  
17 It is incredibly diverse in a way that, you know, it  
18 think is all that we could have hoped for and more  
19 from that process.

20 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Yeah, I will  
21 endeavor to say something controversial which is I  
22 actually think integration was harmful to the Black  
23 communities in a lot of ways, because it kind of like  
24 crippled and weakened, you know, for us/by us  
25 community right to determination. So, yes, I'm not,



2 you know,-- just for the record, I'm not-- I agree  
3 with the Chancellor's testimony. I don't think moving  
4 kids into a school with other type of kid's equal  
5 academic success, and I think as has been the common  
6 thread I think from us and from you, which is great  
7 we're on the same page, that all school children won.  
8 Their parents, families, they should have choice if  
9 they want to move their children around, but like, if  
10 they want to send their kid up the block, they should  
11 be able to do that. I know in my district we have a  
12 problem of what I call like cream of the crop kids.  
13 Their parents are not sending them to the school up  
14 the block, and I hear it all the time. They yell at  
15 me because they feel like the school is not a school  
16 and they pay all these taxes on their properties, but  
17 they're sending their school to like Baker Heart up  
18 the block, or you know, they're sending their child  
19 to some other private school. And so, I know that's  
20 a whole 'nother problem about like just socioeconomic  
21 kind of diversity within the same community, because  
22 that is definitely the problem in southeast Queens,  
23 because again, a lot of the parents I'd say that are  
24 the more of the well-to-do parents. Most of them do  
25 not have their children in the public schools that

2 are walking distance from their homes which is again  
3 another challenge. Just wanted to turn over my  
4 questions to screening, screen schools. So currently  
5 there's 69 middle school programs that screen student  
6 for admissions. What are the main reasons  
7 superintendents have given for reinstating screen  
8 schools post COVID-19, and how many middle schools  
9 will implement screens for the 2025/2026 school year?  
10 And last but not least, how many of the 69 schools  
11 are gifted and talented programs?

12 CHIEF ENROLLMENT OFFICER KELLY: Thank  
13 you so much for your question. I think the most  
14 general way to answer the question is that they work  
15 with their communities to determine if they're going  
16 to maintain screenings in their schools or not. We  
17 work with our superintendents to understand exactly  
18 what it is that they're looking for for those  
19 schools. We also use data to make sure that we can  
20 discourage sometimes add-in screens, because we do  
21 understand that what they may be trying to achieve in  
22 their school just in terms of sometimes increasing  
23 enrollment is not always going to be the outcomes. So  
24 that is usually the conversation. Now, in terms of  
25 the specific data questions that you have, I don't

2 have them on-hand, but I can definitely provide them  
3 to you at a later time for sure.

4 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: And I'm sure you  
5 know why we're asking that question, because screen  
6 schools can eliminate opportunities or certain  
7 student to potentially matriculate in them.

8 CHIEF ENROLLMENT OFFICER KELLY: Right,  
9 which is-- we definitely understand and we're on the  
10 same page about that, but I also want to say that our  
11 process, we do, you know, have a process in which we  
12 believe is one of the first processes that we have  
13 put in place over years where we're looking at the  
14 top percent of kids across, specifically in a school,  
15 but also within districts. And so, once we have that  
16 we do-- we are able to increase the representation of  
17 all demographics in our screen schools, and we do  
18 have data that shows that as well.

19 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you. Chair?

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Chair. I  
21 so agree. There's a middle school in Brooklyn,  
22 Medgar Evers Middle School and High School. It is a  
23 gem. A majority of the student who attend the school  
24 are Title 1 students, but they all look like me, and  
25 what they're achieving in Brooklyn is magic. And

2 I've always shouted them out, and I told Dr.  
3 Willshire [sp?], that I'm going to shout him out for  
4 the amazing work. The kids are cornerstones.  
5 They're on every honorary society they can be. Those  
6 are the things we also want to celebrate as-- when we  
7 talk about diversity and all of those other things.  
8 I'm going to say the most controverisoal thing ever,  
9 Council Member Williams, is that okay? The schools  
10 that are highly anticipated students who want to go  
11 there, why are we not capping enrollment and allowing  
12 them to go into other schools? I know we had this  
13 conversation before.

14 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Why are we not  
15 capping enrollment in the schools that are the most  
16 desirable?

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Enroll-- yeah. GNT  
18 program-- create new programs at under-enrolled  
19 schools and help balance to diversify.

20 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: But I think  
21 that's-- so the reason I'm repeating the question is  
22 because I think that's what we have been doing in  
23 this administration. I think rather than-- rather  
24 than cap and say now you have to go to a place that  
25 you might not want, what we are doing is creating

2 more desirable programs in neighborhoods where you  
3 otherwise might not have them. Again, thinking  
4 about Bard Bronx, Bard Brooklyn. Thinking about  
5 HBCU. These are programs in schools that we're  
6 standing up in communities to say hey, you can still  
7 want to get into these other schools, but these are  
8 not the only great schools that exist here. Look at  
9 these other programs that-- and you don't have to  
10 travel far to. They're right in your neighborhood.  
11 And I'm so glad that you brought up Medgar Evers,  
12 because actually I just visited, and one of the  
13 things that when we think about screen, you know, in  
14 talking with the principal, it-- they're not  
15 screening for just test scores. It's looking at your  
16 grades in the schools that you're coming from and  
17 parent commitment to being able to sustain a 12-month  
18 model, because those babies are going to school all  
19 year.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah, all year.

21 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: All up until  
22 five, six o'clock and sometimes even on Saturdays,  
23 right? Because they have a very specific model. So,  
24 I think when we're thinking about screens, we're also  
25 just going back to the previous question. We're

2 also-- we're thinking about a number of factors, not  
3 just test scores. As a matter of fact, test scores  
4 are generally not what we're looking at.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: We're looking at the  
6 whole child.

7 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: We're looking  
8 at the whole child. But in terms of these schools,  
9 our strategy has not been to tell people no, we don't  
10 want you to go into these schools that you consider  
11 desirable. We want to make more desirable schools,  
12 and we want to put them in your neighborhoods, but  
13 part of that is the engagement with the  
14 superintendents to figure out what are the  
15 community's needs and desires in a school. We don't  
16 want you to just want to-- I live in a school  
17 district where, you know, it is not-- it's a tale of  
18 two cities. You have some folks who are making a  
19 higher income and definitely many who are not, and my  
20 daughter is a very mixed school. It's very mixed  
21 socioeconomic, but part of us-- part of our  
22 responsibility is also to make sure that all schools  
23 have high-quality curriculum and instruction so you  
24 don't have to make those choices. I don't want to  
25 have to send my kid two districts away because the

2 school up the block isn't good. It's my  
3 responsibility as the Chancellor to make sure that  
4 the school up the block is great, just as it is two  
5 districts away. And so we've done a number of  
6 things. One is New York City Reads and Solves, and I  
7 know that we talk about it all the time, and  
8 everybody's like, it's not the silver bullet,  
9 Chancellor. You got to start talking about other  
10 things, but it is equity work, because if you have to  
11 live in a certain geographic district in order to get  
12 into a good school, that's not acceptable. Number  
13 two is making sure that we're expanding those  
14 programs. So rather than shutting the doors, you  
15 should still apply to those schools and have an  
16 opportunity to get into them, but when there's more,  
17 than those schools do not remain to be like the end-  
18 all be-all. We just need more great schools, but to  
19 do that we have to listen to the communities that  
20 they would sit in.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Is there a need  
22 assessment when you do also look into that? Is there  
23 a need assessment? And how do we center voices of  
24 community? I know you say you do, but not every  
25 parent go to CEC. Not every parent is on a SLT. How

2 do we center parent, and are we talking to young  
3 people? As we always want to make decisions for them  
4 and not with them, how do we engage young people?  
5 So, we also have to center their voices.

6 DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER KALBAN:

7 Yeah, so I can speak a little bit to the sort of  
8 annual needs assessment district planning process  
9 that I think Superintendent Samuels referenced  
10 earlier. So, every spring-- we released these just a  
11 couple of weeks ago. Our office compiles updated  
12 data on sort of everything from utilization and  
13 enrollment, retention rates, enrollment patterns,  
14 really trying to share data with superintendents and  
15 CECs to give them a clear picture of what is going on  
16 in your district. We sit down with the  
17 superintendents first to just kind of dig into that  
18 data and think about where is the data pointing us,  
19 and what are we hearing on the ground? We then  
20 share that with CEC's. That data is publicly  
21 available online as well, and we have ongoing  
22 conversations with CEC's and communities about what  
23 are we seeing in that data. But again, that really  
24 doesn't tell the whole story until we get out and  
25 hear from communities. You know, and I think what



2 you described is something we're continuing to work  
3 on and look for different strategies and that is a  
4 localized approach of how do we get to every family,  
5 how do we hear from those under-represented voices.  
6 You know, and I think that is a big part of how we  
7 did wind up opening Bard Bronx, Bard Brooklyn, and  
8 the September HBCU prop in southeast Queens, because  
9 as we got out into communities and we started to hear  
10 we want these schools. We don't want to have to  
11 travel for them. We need them here. So, doing more  
12 of that work in close partnership with the Office of  
13 New Schools as well, and really thinking about what  
14 are the innovative models that are out there, and  
15 then how do we get out to communities where we have  
16 opportunities and needs to open new schools, whether  
17 that need is based on hey, we have space or we have  
18 an actual seat need, or we are just hearing from a  
19 community. There is something we don't have.

20 SUPERINTENDENT SAMUELS: Yeah, in  
21 District Three and I think all of the superintendents  
22 represented here, none of us reinstated screens after  
23 COVID, and that took a lot of community effort to do.  
24 in my district in particular, 97 percent of parents  
25 get one of their top three choices to middle schools,

2 and so our lottery system is working and working  
3 well.

4 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: This goes back  
5 to your question, though, Chair Williams, when you  
6 asked about best practices. Yes, there's standard  
7 rules of engagement, CECs, etcetera, but we know that  
8 that's not enough because of Chair Joseph's point,  
9 not everyone is sitting on a CEC. These  
10 superintendents go above and beyond to engage in  
11 additional and creative ways, whether that's  
12 virtually, whether that's in-person, going to actual  
13 school events, hosting evens, etcetera. So, again,  
14 this is a way for us to say, hey, this is the  
15 standard practice, but here are additional things  
16 that superintendents are doing that are working when  
17 we want to truly engage a community and have a real  
18 sampling of voice, not just those who have the luxury  
19 of being able to participate-- or I shouldn't say  
20 luxury, but those who find a way to sit in-- to be a  
21 part of some of these structures.

22 SUPERINTENDENT DUNN: I think one of the  
23 things, too, that the Chancellor has really pushed  
24 since taking leadership is on authentic engagement  
25 with communities. So, we can all give examples of

2 like really successful like mergers or rezonings. I  
3 also have examples of, like, I went to the community,  
4 said here's an idea, and the community, the SLTs were  
5 like, we don't like that idea. And it was like,  
6 alright, so now we're going to take your feedback, go  
7 back and we're going to rethink, like, what is a  
8 different way to approach this? Because engagement  
9 is not just me saying here's something that I want to  
10 happen and I'm going to keep telling you how it's  
11 going to happen. Engagement is really about  
12 listening and how I'm showing up to really hear what  
13 are the real needs, and taking that feedback in in  
14 authentic ways.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: you have a follow-  
16 up?

17 SUPERINTENDENT SAMUELS: I think I'm the  
18 only-- the superintendent that actually lives and has  
19 kid in his own schools. So, my authentic engagement  
20 looks like waking up every day and walking out, and  
21 I'm at playgrounds. I'm talking to parents all the  
22 time, because they know that I'm in the same position  
23 as they are, and you know, that looks like hearing  
24 ideas and taking that back to the CEC and talking  
25 about that, and the things that don't work, we try

2 not to do, and then the things that we believe in, we  
3 try to move forward.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Now, that we are  
5 getting our systems in place and creating amazing  
6 schools, how do we close those achievement gaps?  
7 Because I'm looking at the data, and as you can see  
8 in my testimony, in my opening, I said we spend  
9 almost \$32,000 per kid. What's the return on our  
10 investment, and how we're going to close those gaps?

11 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Absolutely.  
12 Great question. We're so happy you asked us that  
13 question. So, again, we started with standardizing  
14 curriculum across the districts, but one of the  
15 things that we were not paying attention to in the  
16 initial roll out of New York City Reads and Solves  
17 are the interventions and the supplemental programs  
18 that kids sit with when here one instruction isn't  
19 enough to access the curriculum. So, for those who  
20 are not educators, because I know I'm preaching to  
21 the Chair Joseph choir, when you cannot-- when you  
22 are not able to access the tier one instruction with  
23 the regular classroom instruction and you need  
24 additional support, sometimes students will then be  
25 pulled into small group instruction, even pulled out

2 of a classroom for support. I can tell you that right  
3 now this administration, we are absolutely working  
4 with schools that are piloting certain collapsing of  
5 tier one and tier two instructions. So that  
6 intervention work actually happens in small groups  
7 within the classrooms, because we believe that  
8 students shouldn't be isolated from that tier one  
9 instruction, even when we're trying to intervene, but  
10 most importantly, the types of programs that kids  
11 have access to have to be research-based. They have  
12 to be impactful, and we have to have oversight of  
13 them. So when we did initial inventory, it was  
14 something like 40-something interventions across the  
15 system. No rhyme or reason. No one's monitoring it.  
16 Sometimes you walk into a district, the  
17 superintendent has a bunch of them happening in their  
18 schools. That's really hard to have oversight. And  
19 so, we said superintendents shouldn't have to do this  
20 work alone. From central we are actually vetting  
21 which are the intervention and supplemental systems  
22 that will be in classrooms. We know that they are  
23 reliable, so the same attention we gave to the  
24 curriculum at tier one, we're doing in tier two-- for  
25 tier two and tier three. Why is that important? I

2 don't want kids wasting time on programs that are not  
3 impactful, and I certainly don't want schools  
4 spending money on things that are not going to be  
5 impactful. The other aspect of it is that we now  
6 have a technological mechanism to have oversight of  
7 these interventions as well. So, we see the dosage  
8 and the frequency. We see how often the kids are  
9 sitting with it and engaging with it. Is it working?  
10 How are you adjusting instruction based on these  
11 data? That's really important, because we don't want  
12 to over-test kids, but we want to make sure that  
13 based on what's happening the classroom on day-to-day  
14 instruct-- with day-to-day instruction and these  
15 interventions and supplemental programs, that when we  
16 see these red flags, we're adjusting instruction to  
17 address them in that moment. So, when you're talking  
18 about the achievement gap, it's not just about  
19 instruction and curricular resources. There's so  
20 many more pieces to this. And when we talk about  
21 instruction, how do we norm across this very, very  
22 large system on what a good instructional practice  
23 is? Again, I don't want my teachers figuring that  
24 out on their own. I don't even want my  
25 superintendents figuring that out on their own. Now,

2 the three superintendents who we have here, they have  
3 excellent practices in their district. There are  
4 other superintendents that have excellent practices.  
5 So going back to Chair Williams' question, which was  
6 also a suggestion, is that we need to curate those  
7 best practices, norm across the system on what is a  
8 best practice, and then make sure that we're  
9 establishing the structures to share across the  
10 districts. But you're right, 31,000 and change is  
11 unacceptable to have these kinds of outcomes. And  
12 the sadder thing is that ours are not the worst in  
13 the nation. It gets much, much worse.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I'm sure, but we are  
15 the leading-- we are the largest school system in the  
16 country, so therefore, we-- when people look to us to  
17 lead, so we got to do better. That's why every time  
18 they opening a sentence and say New York City is the  
19 most segregated school system in the country, it  
20 bothers me. So we need-- we got a lot of work to do,  
21 and I'm here for it along with Chair Williams. Are  
22 you with me? You wanted to add something? You like  
23 coming up here today. You didn't like coming up  
24 here, now you do. Go ahead.

2 DR. PATE: It is so not that, but it is  
3 an important question, and this is one of-- like,  
4 this is my baby.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: That keeps you up at  
6 night, right?

7 DR. PATE: Yeah. So, one of the things  
8 that we have really pointed out for superintendents,  
9 first and foremost, is helping them recognize their  
10 number. So, what does that number mean? So, we have  
11 a total of more than 321,311 students who are not  
12 proficient yet. And that cumulative number  
13 represents the totality of all 45 of our districts.  
14 In high school, ninth and tenth graders, and in  
15 community suits all of the students who we are  
16 measuring for proficiency. Why is that number  
17 important? My push for superintendents and  
18 partnership and under the guidance of our chancellor  
19 is this, you should know your number like you know  
20 your birthday, because in the professional world,  
21 this number is equally as important, and recognizing  
22 that that number actually equates to a child. So, for  
23 me, I have two children in New York City public  
24 schools. My son is in high school, Rowan. He is not  
25 a part of that number, but my daughter is a rising



2 first grader who cannot yet read. She has is not yet  
3 at proficiency. She is a part of that number. So, I  
4 have a personal stake in making sure that the systems  
5 and structures that we roll out as a city not only  
6 impact my daughter who has a mom who has privilege,  
7 but every child, my nieces, my cousins and a host of  
8 the children that make up New York City Public  
9 Schools. And one of the ways that we are being  
10 super-intentional Chair, is that we are ensuring that  
11 everyone has a shared understanding about the  
12 differences that exist between intervention and  
13 supplemental support. So, we want to make sure that,  
14 yes, schools maintain their autonomy. We think it's  
15 important. Every school is unique, but it can't be  
16 reckless autonomy, right? So, autonomy is the cousin  
17 of accountability. So what that means is that in  
18 your selection you need to select from a curated list  
19 that identifies interventions that are working,  
20 supplemental programs that support students, and also  
21 we recognize that there are superintendents who are  
22 doing great work around programs that have not quite  
23 been tested or proven as something that we would  
24 endorse across the City, but they're on like our  
25 watchlist, because they are showing a value add,

2 particularly, we see that. The last time we came  
3 here we spoke about Dr. Van-Ess who's doing some  
4 great work around reading intervention and recovery  
5 for high school, and that is another demographic that  
6 we have to pay attention to. So, again, like we  
7 recognize that this is a big deal. We recognize that  
8 we are not there yet, but I'm always of a stance to  
9 say the things that we're doing that are great, I  
10 want to always acknowledge it, because I think that  
11 really expressing to families that we are a work in  
12 progress, but yet we are aggressively attacking it is  
13 equally important. So, I'm looking forward to the  
14 start of the school year. I'm looking forward to  
15 superintendents having a deep understanding about  
16 intervention supports that improve core instruction  
17 overall. So, yeah.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you for that.  
19 I'm also a parent of a high schooler who's taking  
20 Regent's today, as well, and as I'm watching I see  
21 the struggle across the city with our high school  
22 students with Algebra II, and that's across the  
23 board. I watch data, too. I'm a data nerd. I watch  
24 data. That used to drive my instruction. That also  
25 drive my policies as to where I should put my money,

2 where the children need intervention, and reading is  
3 one of them, and I think as we-- we talked about NYC  
4 Reads how we have to create partnerships with  
5 parents, it should not solely rely on the teachers to  
6 do all of the work. It should be an extension in the  
7 home. And I always give the example that I knew how  
8 to write my-- tie my shoelaces before I went to  
9 school. I knew my times tables before I went to  
10 school because I had my grandparents at home who  
11 taught it. So, we have to go back to making families  
12 partners in this work in order for us to succeed.  
13 And these amazing great schools that we have out  
14 there, how's your marketing-- what's your marketing  
15 budget to let parents know about these amazing  
16 programs-- that sometimes all we hear is how terrible  
17 New York City public school is, but there's some  
18 amazing programs happening. But again, Deputy  
19 Chancellor and Chancellor, no one knows about them.  
20 No one knows you have amazing College Now programs.  
21 You have CTE. You have PTECH schools. No one knows  
22 about them because they're hidden secrets inside of  
23 New York City Public Schools. So, what's the plan to  
24 make sure that people know how amazing the system is  
25 and these are the great things you're doing?

1  
2 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: So  
3 respectfully, I think that we've made a lot of  
4 headway on shining light on the hidden gems. I  
5 definitely think, you know, there's a lot of work to  
6 be done, but through the use of social media and  
7 being really strategic with our platforms, we have  
8 actually made sure that we are highlighting the  
9 schools that are unsung heroes. Along with that, we  
10 also highlight on-the-ground frontline people like  
11 our school safety agents, like our cafeteria workers.  
12 Why is that important when advertising these amazing  
13 schools? Because we want them to know it's not only  
14 the instruction, it's the environment that you're  
15 getting. You want a village to raise your child,  
16 this is the village? And so, in my PS+U-- nobody  
17 wants to hear from me all the time. They don't want  
18 to hear about my-- that's not a diary entry for the  
19 whole city to read. It needs to be about me saying,  
20 hey, went to the school and met this amazing parent  
21 coordinator who's been in the system for 25 years and  
22 who started English-speaking classes for parents. I  
23 can continue? Sorry.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Go ahead. Go ahead.

2 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: It is highlight  
3 our-- it is highlighting the programs from-- that are  
4 coming out of our Future Ready initiative. It is  
5 highlighting the programs that are tied to CTE. It's  
6 talking about the great instruction that's happening  
7 at some of these schools. And guess what? They are  
8 in Brooklyn. They are in parts of Queens. They are in  
9 parts of the Bronx where most people say I don't want  
10 to walk through those neighborhoods. Because we do  
11 not want the stigma attached to these schools where  
12 we know that people say, oh, if it's in that  
13 neighborhood, it can't be a good school. We  
14 absolutely know that that's not true. So, using  
15 social media, using our different platforms, we have  
16 done that work. We also have partnered with our  
17 superintendents to say you are the best narrator of  
18 your story. Like, what is happening in your  
19 district? So, I'll give you an example.  
20 Superintendent Deans in Bronx High School, 8, 10 and  
21 11-- no bias here. You know, I might have been the  
22 superintendent a little bit in that district and  
23 taught and was a principals, but you know, I'm not  
24 personally invested in that district. But we did--  
25 he came up with a brilliant idea that I didn't think

2 of when I was in the district. He actually made a  
3 video with parents and student and teachers and  
4 principals talking about all the different programs  
5 and showcasing it. It's a very short video, but it  
6 gives a comprehensive overview of what is offered.  
7 And what's important about this example? He's got  
8 Bronx High School of Science and American Studies in  
9 his district. Guess which two schools were not  
10 featured in that video? Bronx High School fo Science  
11 and American Studies, because they don't need the  
12 marketing, right? So, this is important for us to  
13 also work at the superintendent level and the school  
14 level to say what are your hidden gems and how are  
15 you going to market them strategically and here's the  
16 support from central.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you,  
18 Chancellor. So, in 2017, New York City Public School  
19 released the diversity plan with three goals to be  
20 achieved within five years: increase number of  
21 students in racially representative schools by  
22 50,000, decrease the number of economically  
23 stratified schools by 10 percent or 150 schools,  
24 increase the number of inclusive schools that serve  
25 English language learners, students with

2 disabilities. Did New York City Public School goal of  
3 increasing the number of students in racially  
4 represented schools-- did you achieve that by 2022?

5 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: No, we have  
6 not. The report, absolutely, it is something that  
7 our team continues to review. We know that we have a  
8 lot of work to do in this area. I think that we have  
9 done some really innovative things that speak broadly  
10 to these goals, but we do have a lot of work to do  
11 across these areas. There's definitely no question  
12 about it, and I hope to have the opportunity to  
13 continue making a dent in this work. First Deputy  
14 Chancellor?

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, what percentage  
16 did you-- what currently-- what are the current  
17 racial representatives compared to 2017? What are  
18 the datas there? What are we seeing?

19 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: So, a  
20 couple of things. One, it's-- you know, people cite  
21 the 2014, now 11-year-old UCLA study. I have serious  
22 issues with their methodology and also based on my  
23 observation of hundreds of districts around the  
24 country, New York City is not even close to being the  
25 most segregated school district in the country. Most

2 of our students, what the data shows-- most of our  
3 students attend schools that have some level of  
4 diversity. It is enough? No. It is at all of our  
5 schools? No. But we have between 400 and 500 schools  
6 where there's no one group, ethnic, racial group  
7 which is a majority. It means it's a very mixed  
8 school. We have about half of our schools-- there's  
9 no predominant group, meaning that there's no one  
10 racial ethnic group that's more than 60 percent.  
11 Chair, the number of schools that are 90 percent  
12 Black and Hispanic has been reduced. So, just to  
13 say, there's a lot of different ways to define  
14 diversity. I think the traditional way has been-- are  
15 Black and Hispanic students going to school with  
16 white students. We obviously have more work to do to  
17 make sure our kids are benefitting from diversity.  
18 I'm a kid who went to intentionally integrated  
19 schools way back in the middle ages when I went to  
20 school. And I'm a-- I benefitted hugely from that.  
21 We got to look at the map. Only 15-16 percent of our  
22 students are white. We can't have a definition of  
23 integration that says our students of color are going  
24 to school with large numbers of white students. That  
25 doesn't make sense. So we have to lean on all the



2 different types of diversity. And again, as you've  
3 heard today, our superintendents, our principals, our  
4 FACE and so forth are doing a lot of work to try to  
5 promote diversity in our schools. We have hundreds  
6 of schools that have specific diversity targets.  
7 That number has increased significantly since they  
8 did that report in 2017. So, we are seeing some  
9 progress, but I also think we have to give credit in  
10 spite of the residential segregation that exists in  
11 spite of the socioeconomic segregation that exists in  
12 our city. Most of our kids are attending schools  
13 with people who don't look like them, don't have the  
14 same background, and many don't have the same  
15 economic circumstances. So that's a good thing.  
16 That is a good thing. Something to build on.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: While there's certain  
18 district in the City when you go in, it's only  
19 represented by one group. So that's still happening.  
20 I'm still seeing in real-time, and anybody knows I'll  
21 go and visit schools. I visited a school and it's in  
22 an area that the students in the area don't go to  
23 that school. It's a lot of outsiders that come to  
24 that buildings, and even the education-- even the  
25 educators are not representative of the students.

2 And even though there's, what, 1,3000 students.  
3 There's only about 150 students of color that got  
4 into that school. So when we talk about doing the  
5 work, there's so much more to do in terms of making  
6 sure we're meeting that moment in making sure our  
7 student have all access to quality education. So, I  
8 don't-- no one can tell me secondhand what's  
9 happening, because I'm seeing it in real-time because  
10 I'm in school buildings as much as I can. Has New  
11 York City Public School achieved the goal of reducing  
12 economically stratified to schools by 10 percent, or  
13 how is that accomplished? How is that looking in  
14 terms of economics.

15 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: No, we  
16 haven't-- we haven't achieved that goal, you know.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What percentage is  
18 now? Nothing?

19 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: I  
20 don't know that we have -- we have that number.  
21 We'll have to look at that and get it to you.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Alright. You'll get  
23 back to me on that number?

24 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yes,  
25 yes, yes, Chair.

1                   CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I think Chair  
2  
3 Williams have a follow-up for you.

4                   CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Yeah. I just  
5 wanted to follow up on-- there has been a lot of  
6 discussion around like community engagement, whether  
7 it's zoning, what school districts want, whether it's  
8 screening, but it does seem to focus on like  
9 traditional, more instructional, I guess like models  
10 of how we manage our schools. And I'm just wondering  
11 like outside of like schools that are designated,  
12 like, community schools, are you also thinking about  
13 tailoring other services that go beyond, you know,  
14 what a traditional school building can do? Because I  
15 think a lot of times, not just-- like, you can give  
16 one child the same instruction as another child and  
17 one child will just inherently succeed over the other  
18 child. So I just always think there are other  
19 conditions that impact students' success, and it's  
20 not just as has been stated, being in a good school  
21 or getting the same type of instruction. I think  
22 certain students require other types of support. So,  
23 I'm just wondering, like, in this assessment, because  
24 I think we've largely been talking about screening  
25 and curriculum and overall resources to a school, but

2 beyond that. I mean, I did hear a laundry [sic] mat.  
3 But, you know, are there any other things that you're  
4 doing or taking into consideration around what a  
5 particular school or school district needs to have  
6 successful student outcomes beyond traditional  
7 methods.

8 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: If I understand  
9 your question, correctly, because you started with  
10 community schools--

11 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: [interposing] I  
12 know because I thought about, like, community Schools  
13 is the only model where they are looking at these  
14 other aspects that impact whether or not a student  
15 can be successful, but even outside of like schools  
16 that have been designated community schools, what  
17 else are you doing as it pertains to, like, the  
18 topic, right? Like diversity, access, opportunities,  
19 are you going beyond just looking at curriculum, and  
20 whether or not a school is getting the same amount of  
21 money as another school? Are there other things that  
22 you're looking at?

23 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: A hundred  
24 percent. So, first of all, one of the reasons why we  
25 made sure that the community school expansion that

2 was built on temporary dollars remained in place is  
3 because we do believe the community school model, so  
4 I want to lead with that. But understanding that  
5 that takes a lot funding and readiness, and not every  
6 school-- although I would love for every school to be  
7 a community school model. Right now, that's not  
8 something we can immediately do. We do look at the  
9 aspects of success from the community school model  
10 and what is scalable. So, as Chair Joseph knows, we  
11 have an Office of Foster Care now, right? We weren't  
12 paying attention to our foster care students the way  
13 that we should. Working in close partnership with  
14 ACS, that's really important, because we need to be  
15 able to educate our families and support them. The  
16 other thing is our incredible work with the student  
17 in Temporary Housing Office. You know, we know that  
18 students who are in temporary housing, the obstacles  
19 that they face can absolutely impact things like  
20 attendance, engagement, and not because they are any  
21 less capable, but because they are facing some very,  
22 very real challenges. So, we do have a holistic  
23 approach when we do these needs assessments with  
24 schools and figure out how we need to further support  
25 them. That also comes in the form of after that

2 assessment, figuring out which community-based  
3 organizations can be paired with them to support  
4 them. And this is why I think it's important that  
5 superintendents are part of the conversation around  
6 budget with principals, because by holding schools  
7 harmless again this year, we know that we are in some  
8 really difficult times and we want to make sure that  
9 all the available funding is going to schools, even  
10 if they are facing enrollment issues, so that way  
11 they can continue with some of these programming  
12 models, but there are times when we need to step in  
13 and say, you know what, this particular school needs  
14 support at the leadership level. They need  
15 additional coaching. They need additional support  
16 from a CBO to help with attendance, to help with gang  
17 violence, to help with engagement. There are so many  
18 other factors, and so we are doing that work. Many  
19 of our superintendents do it on their own, but we are  
20 taking a more centralized approach through New York  
21 City Public School Cares.

22 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Yeah, like I'm--  
23 even principals, I think, do things on their own  
24 outside of the superintendents. I'm thinking of one  
25 principal who they provide schools uniforms, because

2 some of the children can't afford the school  
3 uniforms. They have a food pantry. But it's, again,  
4 individualized by way of this particular school, this  
5 principal who's going above and beyond to meet the  
6 needs of their students so that they can be  
7 successful. But again, just wondering from your  
8 level and sort of institutionalizing approaches to  
9 really support students in a myriad of ways, not just  
10 school curriculum and whether or not it's, you know,  
11 rigorous enough, or you know, you have a CTE program.  
12 All the things that we talk about that make a school  
13 a great school I think has been focused on, like,  
14 curriculum and-- yeah.

15 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Yeah, and this  
16 is why we launched NYCPS Cares, because we wanted a  
17 holistic approach systemwide to support schools, and  
18 so this is-- it's multiphased. First phase was  
19 around anti-bullying, anti-vaping, and the family  
20 connectors. And the family connectors piece is also  
21 super helpful, because we need to build capacity in  
22 our parents so that way they know the resources that  
23 are available to them across New York City. And so  
24 that, we have-- I mean, the last time I checked the  
25 data, we had over 1,000-- Christina, keep me honest.

2 We have 1,800 right now parents, and we just launched  
3 those 1,800 parents who have signed up and who are  
4 going through the training. They're figuring out  
5 what are the resource-- they're learning about the  
6 resources available with sister agencies like ACS  
7 across the system, right? And so that's an important  
8 component. And then, making sure that they're placed  
9 in different parts of the community so that way they  
10 can share these resources with other parents.

11 Council Member Brewer, if she were here, you'd hear  
12 her talk about the washers and dryers. You know,  
13 Kevin Moran has really worked closely with schools  
14 and superintendents where we know that that's a need,  
15 and we have made sure that those washers and dryers  
16 are in place for the community to use. Another thing  
17 is our extended day program and the fact that we make  
18 permits available to extend hours in the day to the  
19 students, because we know schools are safe places and  
20 they want-- a lot of kids want to stay in school.  
21 They want to stay in school and they want to have fun  
22 with their friends, and so making those available  
23 throughout that initiative was also super helpful.

24 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Yeah, and the  
25 reason why I ask that is-- I haven't looked at the



2 UCLA study so, you know, I will take your word for it  
3 that their methodology might not be adequate to  
4 really assess the complexity of New York City, but I  
5 think what we see anecdotally, because I think you  
6 have more of the actual data, but what we see  
7 anecdotally is that schools that are in, you know,  
8 White and/or affluent neighborhoods tend to have  
9 better student outcomes. And so if you are saying  
10 that a lot of these schools, maybe not all,  
11 technically kind of get the same similar things, but  
12 the data doesn't show sort of that by way of student  
13 outcomes, then it poses this question, right? Like,  
14 what is actually happening between various school  
15 districts and school communities? And just a quick  
16 question about what you said around the fact that  
17 most student are in schools that are diverse, are you  
18 seeing that in the lower grades? Because I know  
19 myself pretty much K-8 I was in, like, Black schools.  
20 High school was different, but K-8 I was-- the  
21 schools were majority Black. So just wondering,  
22 like, the numbers that you're talking about, is it  
23 more skewed for upper level grades or are you seeing  
24 it, you know, in the lower level grades? And maybe  
25 it's just because parents just want to, again, just

2 walk their kids to school. I know K-8, I pretty much  
3 was in district, but high school, you know, I was off  
4 on my own into another school district.

5 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yeah,  
6 that's a great-- that's a great question. Yeah, you  
7 know, we do see-- yes, because more of our elementary  
8 schools tend to be zones, so right, they pick up  
9 whatever the residential, you know, demographics are,  
10 and we certainly see a lot of segregation. So you do  
11 see more of it. And not to say that we don't-- I  
12 don't want to leave a false impression that I think  
13 that all of our schools are total rainbows and they  
14 have-- I'm just saying, just want to put the fact out  
15 there that there is some level of diversity in most  
16 of our schools. So, like, 20 percent of our schools,  
17 the number I would give you-- and there's probably  
18 more elementary schools. I would go back and check,  
19 but your-- excuse me, Chair, you're probably right  
20 about this, more elementary schools within this-- 20  
21 percent of our schools have one of the racial ethnic  
22 groups that is 75 percent or more. So, that's-- you  
23 know, that's 20 percent. That's not a tiny number by  
24 any stretch and there's probably more elementary  
25 schools. But you know, it does mean that in most of

2 our schools there's not a predominant-- a dominating  
3 group, and so there is some contact, which is a good  
4 thing, with people who don't come from the same--  
5 students who don't come from the same background.

6 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Yeah, and I just  
7 wanted to also highlight Read Alliance [sic]. I  
8 funded them to just try to support whatever I can do  
9 to help the reading outcomes for children in D29. I  
10 think it's a good program. And what I liked about  
11 the program is that they incorporate a local high  
12 school to go into the school and help, you know, K to  
13 Third grade with reading proficiency. And so I've  
14 heard good things. So, I don't know if it's one of  
15 the programs that you've looked at. I have heard  
16 good things, and they go after school. So, it's also  
17 an opportunity for the children to stay extended day  
18 at their home school. But I did hear good things  
19 about the program.

20 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Thank you so  
21 much. We will definitely-- I've definitely heard of  
22 it myself, but we will touch base with D29 and take a  
23 look at how it-- how it's been rolled out in that--  
24  
25

2 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: It's 176 and the  
3 high school that they worked with I believe was Heart  
4 [sic] which is the campus magnet school.

5 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Okay, great. I  
6 do want to go back to something that you said  
7 earlier, Chair, about the outcome piece, and I  
8 couldn't agree more. There are a number of factors  
9 for our most challenged districts. A lot of it is  
10 sometimes teacher retention, right? If you have a  
11 revolving door of teachers, it's very hard to  
12 maintain that instructional sustainability. It gets  
13 difficult. Which is why we've learned from that and  
14 we are incentivizing to put teachers who are deeply  
15 committed in those districts. That's one factor.  
16 Another one is that we actually weren't giving them  
17 the same thing, right? This is only the second year  
18 that we've been giving them the same thing. Before,  
19 we weren't standardizing curriculum instruction. I  
20 know we've talked a lot about that today, but that is  
21 an important point to make. When we're talking about  
22 equity, we have to make sure that those resources are  
23 going into the schools that they need along with the  
24 coaching. The other piece is we cannot ignore,  
25 poverty, right? We don't have an achievement gap.

2 We have an opportunity gap. And so how are we making  
3 sure that we're giving kids what they need when it  
4 comes to clean clothes, when it comes to access to  
5 programs and initiatives that are going to motivate  
6 them to want to persevere despite their challenges.  
7 And then how are we making parents partners? If I'm  
8 walking into a school building as a parent and I  
9 don't feel like I'm welcome, I feel like I'm being  
10 judged, then I'm not going to want to be your  
11 partner. And something as simple as-- I'll end with  
12 this-- on how we approach attendance, right? This  
13 has been a really challenging year for all the  
14 reasons that we don't even have to list because we  
15 know them, and yet, our attendance, you know, even  
16 with some fluctuations, we're still holding right now  
17 overall year attendance at 90 percent, and I think  
18 that speaks a lot about the efforts. But one of the  
19 things we did was adjust our language. We weren't  
20 sending out letters that say send your kids to  
21 school; you're not sending your kids to school. We've  
22 changed that language to say, hey, we noticed your  
23 child isn't in school. We know these are some of the  
24 barriers and we're addressing them. What can we do  
25 to help you get your kids to school? Because we know

2 that sometimes a grandma who is taking care of a  
3 child in a five-story walk-up and it's 100 degrees  
4 outside, they might not be able to come downstairs  
5 and then go back upstairs. But you know what, we  
6 have walking school buses in some of the districts.  
7 We have partnerships with CBOs who are supporting.  
8 We have dedicated teachers. Again, going back to  
9 pulling those best practices together and figuring  
10 out how we can standardize them in our most-  
11 challenged districts. So this work is far from done,  
12 but I'm glad that what you essentially did was lay  
13 out a framework for how we should be thinking about  
14 schools holistically, because it's not just academic  
15 achievement, but academic outcomes really are a  
16 reflection of the need to double-down on all these  
17 areas.

18 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you,  
19 Chancellor.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Those  
21 are the social safety nets we talk about impacting  
22 our student in NYCHA, when there's no water, when  
23 there's no elevator, and if the grandparent that's  
24 taking care of them can't go up and down the stairs,  
25 I know communities where they send folks to go pick

2 up the kids. So these are the things that we're  
3 facing so we know that it's not just academic. Those  
4 social safety nets need to continue to be in place  
5 where there's community schools, pantries, partnering  
6 with ACS to have pantries, and meeting parents before  
7 they get involved with ACS cases. This is something  
8 we did this year with the Council along with ACS.  
9 So, there's a lot of work that's being done. So, New  
10 York City Public Schools stated that removals of  
11 screens during COVID increased the percentage of  
12 admissions offered to lower-income students to 48  
13 percent and ELL students to seven percent. How has  
14 that number changed since the screens were reinstated  
15 in 2022?

16 CHIEF ENROLLMENT OFFICER KELLY: So,  
17 every screen high school we reserve seats that  
18 reflect our borough-level demographics for students  
19 with disabilities as well as multi-lingual learners.  
20 For Fall 2025, 14 percent of offers went to students  
21 with disabilities, and five percent to English  
22 language learners, closely aligning with our borough  
23 benchmarks. But also just to note that-- I said this  
24 before, one of the things that we take pride in how  
25 we also communicate to families, these options in

2 terms of extra seats that we set aside for students  
3 with disabilities that is in My Schools.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And our student with  
5 multi-language learners, I noticed there was a drop  
6 in the numbers. You said it was five percent?

7 CHIEF ENROLLMENT OFFICER KELLY: Five  
8 percent. All of those numbers are steady.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. In 2019, the  
10 Student Advisory-- the School Diversity Advisory  
11 Group issued 100 recommendations, how many which were  
12 adopted? Still live in New York City Public School  
13 website, what has New York City Public Schools done  
14 to evaluate the progress on these adopted  
15 recommendations? Are you able to provide update to  
16 the Council on the progress of each of those adopted  
17 recommendations and by when?

18 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Chair, I'm  
19 sorry. I think it's coffee time for me. I'm going  
20 to need you to-- if you could please kindly repeat  
21 that?

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Oh, sure.

23 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: So,  
24 Chair, I think fair to say, I know that happened in  
25 2019, and the Chancellor will jump in as well. But



2 I'm the one with the reading glasses, so I got a leg  
3 up--

4 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: [interposing] I  
5 lost a contact lens, Chair. I can't read.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You'll read-- this  
7 is a read-aloud part.

8 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: It's  
9 read-aloud. So, you know, COVID happened. We're  
10 certainly aware of those recommendations. The over--  
11 the big recommendation was around equity, and so this  
12 is something as you've heard. You know, job one that  
13 the Chancellor has laid out is making sure that all  
14 of our kids are strong readers, which has affected  
15 our marginalized communities more than others. On  
16 the specific recommendations, we are looking at them  
17 to see which ones are still relevant and dovetail  
18 with the Chancellor's priorities. So we'll be happy  
19 to meet with you to talk about that.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: There was a report  
21 that came out that said that this administration has  
22 set the school system back from all the progress that  
23 it had made in terms of diversity.

24 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: In  
25 terms of-- well, we would take issue with that. If

2 anything, our system is more diverse. One of the  
3 things, I'll give you an example. Our screen high  
4 schools where I think we did a good job of kind of  
5 harmonizing. We were hearing from different groups of  
6 parents who in some cases has diametrically opposed  
7 opinions. You should use test scores with rank  
8 ordering of kids, one to 10,000. Other people said  
9 no screens anywhere at all. if you looked at our  
10 screen-- the demographics of our screened high  
11 schools, some of them are the hidden gems, Chair, I  
12 think you're talking about. Two-third of them come  
13 from economically-disadvantaged households. Majority  
14 are Black and Hispanic students. You know, the  
15 percentage of demographics, White, Asian, Hispanic  
16 are relatively close to what it is overall. So, and  
17 again, we're not forcing anybody to go to those  
18 schools. These are screened high schools that our  
19 parents are choosing. We try to make that process  
20 under Trevonda's leadership more and more  
21 transparent. So we think we're actually making quite  
22 a bit of progress. The other thing, you may have  
23 some questions about this-- we put out some social  
24 media on this recently. AP tests, Advanced  
25 Placement, which we hear a lot from our students and

2 our parents wanting access there. Not only this past  
3 year did we have more student than ever in history  
4 taking the exams, this was something we were really  
5 excited-- Chancellor was really excited about this.  
6 We have more students including double-digit gains of  
7 Black and Hispanic students passing, meaning they get  
8 college credit, meaning they don't have to pay  
9 tuition on that. So we think we're making a lot of  
10 progress that certainly if you look at the spirit of  
11 the recommendations in the report is aligned to that.  
12 The specific recommendations post-COVID, some of them  
13 are more relevant than others, and we're certainly  
14 analyzing that.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, I'm just going  
16 to ask a few more, and then what we'll do is we're  
17 going to follow up with you. How many--

18 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG:  
19 [interposing] [inaudible]

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: district diversity  
21 working groups have been formally established to this  
22 day?

23 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: I'm  
24 not aware that we have groups. I think, you know,  
25 superintendents certainly have working groups around

2 diversity, but we haven't tracked that as yet. We  
3 would have to-- we would have to look into that to  
4 see. We certainly have-- yes, we certainly have  
5 employee resource groups.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, I'm going to ask  
7 a few questions around Intro 955. Oh, what is the  
8 status of the compliance of Local Law 225 in  
9 establishing a Diversity Working Group in each  
10 community school?

11 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: We  
12 have not [inaudible] with that, Chair.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Do you plan on it?

14 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: It is  
15 something we are looking at, yes.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. So, I'm going  
17 to ask you questions around Intro 955. How many  
18 afterschool programs are currently offered across DOE  
19 school buildings, including those operated by DOE,  
20 DYCD and external partners?

21 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: We have Dr.  
22 Melendez joining us.

23 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR MELENDEZ: Hello. High  
24 schools, correct? High schools and middle schools or  
25 everybody?

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Afterschools across  
3 the City, where-- the question is not in any  
4 particular, whether it's elementary, middle school,  
5 or high school, it's how many afterschool programs  
6 across the DOE's school's buildings, DOE, DYCD, and  
7 external providers?

8 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR MELENDEZ: So, we have--  
9 - I'm going to go with SEEP [sic]. Those are the  
10 numbers I have and I can break those down. I can also  
11 get back to you with the programs themselves, but  
12 1,031,948 seats across various programs, DYCD, CBOs,  
13 etcetera.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many students  
15 are currently enrolled across these programs?

16 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR MELENDEZ: We have the  
17 1,031,000 seats. I don't have the actual numbers of  
18 the-- never mind. 490 in our elementary schools, 247  
19 programs in our middle schools, and then 204 in our  
20 middle schools.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many seats-- how  
22 many total seats are available and what's the  
23 percentage of those seats that are currently filled?  
24  
25

2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR MELENDEZ: I haven't  
3 done the math on that, Chair, but that's the  
4 1,031,000.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How does New York  
6 City Public School coordinate with Department of  
7 Youth and Community, DYCD, to collect shared data on  
8 afterschool programs such as location, seat  
9 availability, enrollment, and attendance?

10 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR MELENDEZ: We do our  
11 very worst-- best to work in partnership with them,  
12 particularly now in their expansion and thoughts.  
13 We've been very strong collaborators in that work.  
14 Even the 40 schools that they are starting with, we  
15 had-- we were strongly connected in the conversations  
16 and thinking about their selection.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Does-- okay. So,  
18 now-- so this question you wouldn't be able to answer  
19 it as well then. Alright, so this part of the  
20 question, I'm going to send it in in writing, and I  
21 need it to be answered. I'm going to talk about class  
22 size. How does New York City Public School ensure  
23 that implementation of class size law does not  
24 exacerbate existing patterns of social or economic  
25 segregation?

2 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Well, our  
3 initial concern with the class size law was precisely  
4 that, which is why-- and Yael, I know you'll jump in.  
5 but I just want to initially say that part-- that's  
6 why our process on asking principals to submit  
7 proposals on how to solve their issues specific to  
8 their schools was really important. That gave us an  
9 opportunity to work with UFT and CSA and make sure  
10 that all schools that were facing this issue were  
11 given resources equitably. And so very, very proud  
12 of that work, because that is where we're going to  
13 see an increase in the number of teachers. Some  
14 office spaces or other spaces being converted back to  
15 classrooms, those are all ways that we are going to  
16 make sure we are complying with class size law while  
17 still making sure that we're paying attention to the  
18 equity piece.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And in the class--  
20 in the draft Class Size Reduction Plan, does it  
21 address how equity, diversity and integration will  
22 factor into implementing this law?

23 DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER KALBAN:  
24 Yes, I think one thing to add to the Chancellor's  
25 response to your last question is just that in the

2 plans that schools submitted, they had to demonstrate  
3 that they would do this without reducing enrollment  
4 and without eliminating any of the programs we talked  
5 about today, like dual language programs, programs  
6 like NEST or D75 inclusion. So that's been a  
7 critical part of the process, and at this stage,  
8 enrollment reductions are not a part of the process  
9 that we're up to at this point. In the draft Class  
10 Size Reduction Plan we do demonstrate that, you know,  
11 what we're seeing right now in our compliance data is  
12 that our schools with higher economic need are  
13 already in higher compliance. And as the Chancellor  
14 said, we're going to continue to work across the  
15 board and with our union partners to continue to  
16 prioritize those schools in ensuring that they're  
17 able to maintain and grow those compliance rates.

18 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: And one  
19 thing I'll say, Chair, I'm going to-- the good news I  
20 would say is if a school has-- hundreds of our  
21 schools do have a diversity admissions program.  
22 There's no reason-- we wouldn't accept it if they  
23 wanted to change that as a result of class size.  
24 They should be able to continue that program  
25 unimpeded with smaller classes, and as Yael says,



2 they're not reducing the overall number of students.

3 So that wouldn't be a reason to stop recruiting more

4 diverse student body. So hopefully we'll not see

5 that sort of interruption of diversity efforts.

6 Obviously, we have concerns as Yael was pointing out

7 that you know, the-- there is a correlation between

8 fewer classes being in compliance and higher income

9 levels in the surrounding areas. So, you know, that

10 is something we're looking at. The law doesn't give a

11 lot of discretion in how it is implemented. In five

12 years we have to get to 100 percent, we're obviously

13 committed to complying with the law.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Because Council

15 Member Narcisse left, she left me a couple of

16 questions to ask. So I'm going to-- this will be my

17 last set of questions. What targeted strategies is

18 the DOE using to recruit more teachers in our public

19 school system? I think we talked about that. And

20 how is the New York City Public Schools addressing

21 mental health needs of immigrant students,

22 particularly those who have experienced trauma,

23 housing instability, discrimination, or where stigma

24 around seeking help still exists within our

25 communities?

2 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: So, I know we  
3 talked a lot about the first one. So if I could just  
4 go directly to the second one, Chair? I appreciate  
5 you. We have expanded mental health clinics which is  
6 very important to us. We also, thanks to-- thanks to  
7 all of you here at City Council, we have been able to  
8 ensure that every single school has access to a  
9 social worker, a school counselor, things that  
10 unfortunately were luxuries, and when we're speaking  
11 about equity, we know that those are not luxuries,  
12 they're necessities. The other thing is I also want  
13 to continue to uplift and repeat the outstanding work  
14 that Mark Rampersant does. You know, we talk a lot  
15 about the work that he does in the physical safety  
16 realm, but we don't talk enough about the mental  
17 health space, and he and his team have really worked  
18 closely with universities to strategically partner  
19 schools with social work interns who really are  
20 invested in the communities. And so, mental health  
21 is very important to us and we are making sure that  
22 we're-- that those things continue and they expand.  
23 The other piece of it is as part of New York City  
24 Public School Cares, we have some announcements on

2 the horizon specific to mental health supports, and  
3 happy to brief you before these announcements.

4 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Chair,  
5 if I could just very briefly respond to build on Mark  
6 Rampersant's answer to Council Member Marmorato in  
7 her bill. We, first of all, very sorry for the loss  
8 of your grandfather, and second, that sounds like a  
9 terrible event. So we extend our condolences there.  
10 Our understanding, while we're always looking for new  
11 technology, we appreciate your saying that the  
12 abdominal thrust, the Heimlich, are the primary, you  
13 know, maneuver to deal with choking, we're always on  
14 the lookout for if there are additional technologies  
15 or training that would improve our ability to save  
16 lives. We're open to that. Our understanding is that  
17 the Life Vac or similar devices are at least not yet  
18 FDA-approved, so we have concerns about using them  
19 until they get that approval, but would be happy to  
20 work with you to maybe learn about, you know, other  
21 technologies, other equipment, other training that  
22 might enhance our ability to keep our kids and adults  
23 safe.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. It's  
25 always great to see you all. we'll follow up with

2 some other questions offline, and we look forward as  
3 always to work with you to move the needle. Thank  
4 you so much.

5 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Thank  
6 you, Chair.

7 CHANCELLOR AVILES-RAMOS: Thank you,  
8 Chair.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Of course.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good afternoon,  
11 everyone. May I ask you to please keep your  
12 conversations down to a minimal. We have a hearing  
13 next door. Once again, please keep your  
14 conversations down. Folks, please quiet down in the  
15 chambers. Take the conversations out to the rotunda,  
16 please.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I now open the  
18 hearing for public testimony. I remind members of  
19 the public that this is a government proceeding and  
20 that decorum shall be observed at all times. As  
21 such, members of the public shall remain silent at  
22 all times. The witness table is reserved for people  
23 who wish to testify. No video recording or  
24 photography is allowed from the witness table.  
25 Further, members of the public may not present audio

2 or video recordings as testimony, but may submit  
3 transcript of such recordings at Sergeant at Arms for  
4 inclusion in the hearing record. If you wish to  
5 speak today at today's hearing, please fill out an  
6 appearance slip with the Sergeant at Arms and wait to  
7 be recognized. When recognized, you'll have three  
8 minutes to speak on today's oversight topic or  
9 legislation. If you have a written testimony or  
10 additional statement you wish to submit for the  
11 record, please provide a copy of the testimony at  
12 Sergeant at Arms. You may also email at  
13 [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov) within 72 hours of this  
14 hearing. audio and video recording will not be  
15 accepted. We're going to call the first panel.  
16 Clarissa Kunizaki-- if I mispronounce your name,  
17 forgive me-- Kulsoom Tapal, Jania Witherspoon, Alia  
18 Solima, and Amena Mohamed. Please give me grace if I  
19 did mess up your name.

20 KULSOOM TAPAL: Good afternoon. Am I  
21 good to go? Okay. Hi, thank you so much for  
22 convening us today and for a really informative  
23 session so far, and thank you for allowing us to  
24 testify. My name is Kulsoom Tapal and I am  
25 representing the Coalition for Asian American

2 Children and Families. CACF is the nation's only Pan-  
3 Asian children and family advocacy organization.

4 We're proud members of the Integration Coalition, a  
5 collective of advocates working to advance policies  
6 that combat school segregation and promote equitable  
7 education for all. New York City remains one of the  
8 most segregated school systems in the country. This  
9 segregation directly harms AAPI students and

10 families, particularly those from low-income  
11 immigrant and English language learner backgrounds.

12 At a time when anti-immigrant, anti-DEI rhetoric is  
13 rising nationwide, it's more critical than ever to  
14 ensure that our public schools are places of  
15 inclusion, access, and opportunity for all students.

16 To advance school integration and ensure equitable  
17 education for all, CACF recommends that the New York  
18 City Department of Education and city leadership take

19 the following actions: We first ask that New York  
20 City is fully-funding our public schools by

21 baselining funding for key educational programming  
22 like immigrant family outreach, restorative justice,  
23 and early childhood education outreach, to name a few  
24 programs. These are all essential to support

25 integration efforts. Without programs like these,

2 many AAPI students would lose critical support  
3 systems that enable them to thrive academically and  
4 socially, and integrate properly in their school  
5 communities. Second, we call for the passing of  
6 Intro 1134 in City Council to collect and publicly  
7 report disaggregated data by ethnicity, language  
8 proficiency, and income level. To better understand  
9 and address disparities in the educational access and  
10 outcomes for AAPI students and other marginalized  
11 communities. Three, maintain and build upon existing  
12 reforms that eliminate discriminatory admissions  
13 criteria while increasing transparency and public  
14 oversight of the admissions process to ensure fair  
15 access to all schools. Four, implement class size  
16 mandates with integration in mind, with school  
17 communities in mind, and with their collaboration of  
18 school communities. Five, ensure a CRC curriculum is  
19 taught-- a culturally-responsive education is taught  
20 in every school to ensure further integration, and to  
21 ensure that a school environment that promotes  
22 integration is created. Six, strengthen language  
23 access services by expanding interpretation and  
24 translation services for immigrant and ELL families,  
25 ensuring they're included in decision-making

2 processes regarding school policies and integration  
3 efforts. And seven, develop meaningful--

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] Thank  
5 you.

6 KULSOOM TAPAL: Thank you. We have our  
7 [inaudible] here.

8 CLARISSA KUNIZAKI: Hi, everybody. Thank  
9 you so much for facilitating this conversation. I  
10 want to specifically thank Chair Joseph and the rest  
11 of the Council for having me here today. So, my name  
12 is Clarissa Kunizaki. I'm a junior at Brooklyn  
13 Technical High School in Brooklyn and a youth  
14 advocate at the Asian American Student Advocacy  
15 Project, ASAP. ASAP is CACF's citywide youth  
16 leadership program. So, before ninth grade I  
17 attended predominantly White schools. As someone of  
18 mixed Japanese-Ecuadorian and Irish descent, I often  
19 feel out of place in these spaces. For instance, my  
20 Asian and Latino family members were often asked if  
21 they were the nanny by other parents during pick-ups,  
22 and I thought that going to high school, my high  
23 school which had a greater presence of AAPI students,  
24 that this would free me from a lot of the racialized  
25 microaggressions and inner conflict that I witnessed



2 before, but I was wrong. Last fall, my school was on  
3 a hold where students had to stay in their classrooms  
4 until it was lifted. Immediately, rumors that blamed  
5 a Latino ninth grader for allegedly assaulting a  
6 teacher were circulated in group chats of both  
7 parents and students, but because there are so few  
8 Latino students at my school, many didn't question or  
9 realize the harm that this false profiling caused.  
10 And situations like this are deeply-alarming  
11 realities that are perpetuated by the lack of Black  
12 and Latino students at my school. In terms of my  
13 coursework, this year I opted to take sociology.  
14 There are far fewer AAPI students in my classes like  
15 this compared to those in my STEM classes who are  
16 pushed to choose because of the model minority  
17 stereotype and condition by society to remain quiet,  
18 submissive and STEM-oriented. While sociology, AP  
19 English Language, and my other humanities classes  
20 have been my most formative in my K through 12  
21 education, it deeply saddens me that discussions  
22 pertaining to race and oppression are often not  
23 enriched by students of color from all backgrounds  
24 who are directly impacted by these issues. The lack  
25 of students of color in these conversations is its

1 own injustice, and these missing perspectives are  
2 manufactured. Even in the school where there are many  
3 AAPI students, there's still a lack of understanding  
4 of our histories that are diverse, and the harm of  
5 segregation isn't isolated. It fuels anti-Asian,  
6 anti-Black, and xenophobic attitudes among all. a  
7 lot of this hate comes from not knowing each other,  
8 and when students don't form real connections, they  
9 don't care to learn and aren't given the opportunity  
10 to do so in the first place. Misunderstandings and  
11 stereotypes fueled by residential segregation are so  
12 often exacerbated by school segregation. New York  
13 City Public Schools fail us when they don't create  
14 spaces where all students are given equitable  
15 opportunities to thrive, and creating these spaces is  
16 not enough. They need to be actively nurtured to  
17 sustain positive impacts, including fair funding,  
18 implementation of inclusive AANHPI [sic] curricula,  
19 professional development, and the hiring of diverse  
20 staff. I would not be in the position I am here today  
21 without the guidance of my teachers and peers of  
22 color that I see myself in, particularly in  
23 humanities subjects. But the truth is, I shouldn't  
24 have to go out of my way to search for these  
25

2 connections on my own time. There must active  
3 support from legislators to ensure our students are  
4 able to learn in a diverse integrated and fully-  
5 funded school environment. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

7 ALIA SOLIMAN: Thank you, Chair Joseph  
8 and the members of the Committee on Education, for  
9 giving me the chance to speak to you all today. My  
10 name is Alia Soliman and I'm a junior at the Bronx  
11 High School of Science. I'm here today to speak not  
12 against the discovery program, but against the way  
13 that we abandon students after three to five-week  
14 window. This program was created to provide access  
15 and opportunity to students who show promise but have  
16 not had the same resources as their peers, but once  
17 those few weeks are over, they're dropped into a  
18 high-pressure school environment with little to no  
19 sustained support and while the intention may be  
20 equity, the result is often harm. These students are  
21 left behind to fend for themselves in schools that  
22 frankly do not have the infrastructure to provide the  
23 academic, emotional, or cultural support that they  
24 need. These students are left to navigate schools  
25 that are still shaped by that deep-rooted

2 segregation, and they're placed in environments that  
3 weren't built to support their emotional, cultural,  
4 or academic needs, because those supports were never  
5 designed for students from underserved backgrounds.

6 Meanwhile, their peers often from wealthier and  
7 better-resourced middle schools continue to excel,  
8 not because they're more capable, but because the  
9 system has always worked in their favor. At Bronx

10 Science I've watched as the discovery program  
11 students are often quietly labeled and treated as  
12 less than, seen as having received a hand-out.

13 They're isolated, judged and told in a hundred subtle  
14 ways that they do not belong. And the data reflects  
15 what student don't already know. Many discovery

16 student struggle to keep pace with peers from more  
17 affluent middle schools such as Booker T. Washington,  
18 and that's not a failure of the students. It's a

19 failure of the system. So, I want to propose an  
20 extension of the discovery program. It's not just a  
21 summer boot camp, but it's a four-year program that

22 it is embedded within the specialized high school  
23 system. It provides stipends, incentives for  
24 students to attend weekly meetings, mentorship

25 circles and academic support sessions for the

2 entirety of their freshman year, giving them a seat  
3 at the table, and not just a foot in the door. Over  
4 time, this extension would close that achievement  
5 gap, build confidence and create that pipeline if  
6 diverse empowered students who feel like they truly  
7 belong and are equipped to lead. If the DOE truly  
8 believes in equity, it needs to move beyond the  
9 quotas and percentages that we all heard today and  
10 commitment to a real investment in student's success.  
11 Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Go  
13 ahead.

14 AMENA MOHAMED: Good afternoon. Thank  
15 you, Chair Joseph, members of the Committee on  
16 Education and members of the Committee on Civil and  
17 Human Rights, for giving me the opportunity to talk  
18 to you today. My name is Amena. I'm a New York City  
19 Public High School student. I'm here today as an  
20 activist with the Center for Anti-Violence Education,  
21 but most of all, I'm here as an advocate for my  
22 community. I decided to put forth all my efforts to  
23 stand up for them. I'm very grateful to go to a  
24 school that's pretty diverse and does a great job of  
25 bringing resources to its students from different

2 backgrounds, but in my position as a youth community  
3 organizer and a high school student who has friends  
4 that go to other high schools, I'm very well aware  
5 that not all schools are like this. My friends have  
6 to walk through metal detectors in the morning and  
7 have their bags checked every day. Their guidance  
8 counselors doesn't have time-- enough time in the day  
9 to get to them amidst the other 300 students they're  
10 responsible for. My friends in areas with large  
11 Black populations are disproportionate risk of ending  
12 up on an unethical database. Every person from my  
13 community that goes to a specialized high school  
14 struggles in some way or another because their  
15 specific needs as people of color are not being met.  
16 My friend Azrin [sp?] isn't allowed to pray at  
17 school. Eid holiday was mis-scheduled by the DOE and  
18 my friend Hannah still couldn't miss school on Eid  
19 Day, because she had an important test. The things  
20 that makes my schools and community organization work  
21 so well is the implementation of Restorative Justice  
22 practices. I'm in spaces that prioritize me. Now,  
23 the Citywide Council for High School Students, or  
24 CCHS, is passing a resolution to halt all funding to  
25 Restorative Justice. They want to suspend

2 Restorative Justice in schools so they can go back to  
3 suspending our students. It scares me to read the  
4 news about a right wring power grab on my education.  
5 I don't want to lose my privileges and resources.  
6 But while I have them I'll use them to fight for my  
7 friends and family. It's unfair that the location or  
8 majority demographic of your school dictates how much  
9 resources you have access to. This is segregation.  
10 I want you to listen to the experts on this and those  
11 most affected by it, the Restorative Justice  
12 Specialists, the guidance counselors, the most  
13 importantly the students. We want to go to school  
14 knowing that we will be listened to by our educators.  
15 We don't want out-of-touch employees make decisions  
16 about our education without taking us into  
17 consideration. Protect the funding that prioritizes  
18 me and my friends. I have copies of my testimony if  
19 you would like them.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Sure. Thank you.

21 JANIA WITHERSPOON: That was beautiful.  
22 Thank you, Chair Rita Joseph and the City Council  
23 for your ongoing support on arts education. I'm  
24 usually advocating on behalf of Restorative Justice,  
25 but I'm taking a little bit of a different lens and

2 I'm here to advocate on behalf of arts education.

3 And I urge the city to fully fund the arts and build

4 a public school system where students feel seen and

5 are able to creatively express themselves. My name

6 is Jania Witherspoon. I'm a social worker and the Co-

7 founder of the Circle Keepers, a Brooklyn-based not

8 that trains youth as Restorative Justice

9 practitioners as socially-conscious organizers. And

10 we use culture and educational organizing to heal the

11 harms of racial segregation in schools and harms that

12 we hear today that are deeply rooted in both history

13 and the present. I saw this firsthand. I'm a proud

14 graduate of Harvest Collegiate High School, a school

15 that valued restorative circles and creative

16 expression. It changed my life, but even in that

17 space, I noticed how students of color were under-

18 represented, even in advanced classrooms, and how

19 access to the arts varied dramatically depending on

20 what neighborhood you came from. As a young Black

21 girl in mostly White learning environments, I had to

22 learn how to advocate for myself and for others, and

23 that experience definitely shaped everything I do

24 now. Today, I work with youth navigating the same

25 inequities I faced, and in some ways, it's worse.



2 Many of our partner schools don't have single full-  
3 time certified art teachers. Programs are delayed,  
4 under-funded or treated as optional, and when young  
5 people are struggling with trauma, poverty, racism,  
6 these creative spaces are not just enrichment,  
7 they're survival. One student I mentored some days  
8 back nearly dropped out due to her chronic anxiety.  
9 But yet, due to arts program, she was able to find  
10 her voice again through her story-telling and poetry  
11 circles. Today, she leads circles in her own school,  
12 and that's the power of arts education rooted in  
13 healing and justice, but right now that power is at  
14 risk. The loss of 14.8 percent of certified art  
15 teachers compounded by expiring federal funds and  
16 looming budget cuts threatens to erase the very  
17 programs that helps students to stay connected to  
18 schools and to themselves. Arts education should not  
19 be a privilege, it should be a right, and a promise  
20 we keep to every young person in this city, and thank  
21 you for your time and your commitment.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: thank you. And just  
23 for the record, this Council fights hard for arts  
24 education and it is in the budget this year as part  
25 of our response and it's in there. And schools who

2 do not have certified arts teachers get a grant to  
3 make sure they have arts in the building. I'm-- we  
4 outside doing the work. Thank you so much. Thank  
5 you all. Thank you for your young voices always  
6 being advocates. We are proud of you. Keep walking  
7 into spaces and keep raising your voices. Thank you.  
8 The next panel, Lara Lai, Nyah Berg, Rochelle Dj  
9 [sic], Randi Levine, Matt Gonzales, and Matt-- I took  
10 off my glasses-- Chacko. I took off my glasses,  
11 forgive me.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You may begin.

13 LARA LAI: I was going to say good  
14 afternoon, but good evening, Chair Joseph, Chair  
15 Williams, and members of the City Council Education  
16 and Civil and Human Rights Committees. My name is  
17 Lara Lai and I'm the Senior Policy Analyst and  
18 Strategic Organizer for Education in the Office of  
19 New York City Comptroller Brad Lander. Thank you for  
20 the opportunity to testify before you today at this  
21 important hearing. Comptroller Lander has a very  
22 deep record of commitment to racial diversity and  
23 equity in New York City Public Schools, but today I'm  
24 here to discuss another form of persistent exclusion  
25 and segregation that many New York City students

2 face. Students with disabilities make up 22 percent  
3 of all New York City Public School students, yet  
4 continue to face multiple barriers to full inclusion,  
5 full equity with their peers. In our office's recent  
6 report, *Stranded After School*, made clear children  
7 with disabilities face a disproportionate lack of  
8 access to the free afterschool programs that many of  
9 their peers enjoy. This report is based on an  
10 analysis of findings from a recent survey by our  
11 office of over 600 New York City public and charter  
12 school principals on their afterschool programs. The  
13 survey found that the lack of afterschool bus  
14 transportation is a major barrier to afterschool care  
15 citywide, posing a particular challenge to the 62,000  
16 students with IEP mandated bus transportation.  
17 Nearly a third of all surveyed respondents and 100  
18 percent of District 75 respondents named the lack of  
19 school bus transportation in our survey as a barrier  
20 to student afterschool participation. Another  
21 barrier identified by our survey is the way District  
22 75 afterschool programs are funded and operated which  
23 significantly constrains their ability to meet  
24 students' afterschool needs. Just 74 percent of  
25 District 75 schools in the survey have afterschool

2 programs compared to 93 percent of schools outside  
3 District 75. District 75 programs do not have access  
4 to the primary source of supplementary afterschool  
5 funding in the city Department of Youth Community  
6 Development funding, DYCD. None of the District 75  
7 respondents in our survey have DYCD-funded  
8 afterschool programs compared to 49 percent of  
9 respondents from other schools. Most DYCD funded and  
10 contracted community-based organizations cannot meet  
11 the specialized needs of student in District 75,  
12 leaving these programs to rely more heavily on  
13 funding from DOE central and staffing afterschool  
14 programs with their own teachers and paras who are  
15 paid per session. There are also inequities in City  
16 Council CASA grant allocations. Only six percent of  
17 District 75 schools in our survey benefit from CASA  
18 grants compared to 15 percent of other respondents.  
19 In addition, fee for service programs are less common  
20 in District 75 than among other respondents. And I  
21 have a list of recommendations. I can read them to  
22 you or you can look at them in the submitted  
23 comments.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Is it in your  
25 testimony?

2 LARA LAI: It's in the written testimony  
3 as well.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Got it.

5 LARA LAI: In particular, I just want to  
6 highlight the inequity in the CASA grant allocations  
7 which I think is something that this City Council  
8 could potentially do something about.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Definitely look at  
10 it, definitely. Thank you.

11 NYAH BERG: Good evening, folks. My name  
12 is Nyah Berg. I'm the Executive Director of New York  
13 Appleseed. We're a nonprofit that advocates for  
14 integrated schools and communities in New York City  
15 and State. To move something forward, I believe we  
16 must understand where we've been. So, in the most  
17 succinct, rapid-fire way possible, I just want to  
18 note a few key points on the timeline. Number one,  
19 2012, that is when the New York Times said that we  
20 are one of the most segregated school systems in  
21 country. So, if you want to not agree with the UCLA  
22 report, you can also take on the 2012 New York Times  
23 report, the IBO report or the 2021 UCLA report.  
24 There's also been a lot of movement from there. It  
25 provided urgency to the City so that we no longer had

2 a shield of being one of the most diverse cities in  
3 the country because we also called out our  
4 segregation. You had the diversity in admissions in  
5 2013 and 2014. They were great investments by New  
6 York State and a grant program. Then grants went to  
7 Districts One, Three, Nine, 13, 16. A lot of the  
8 districts that you saw speak today, they've all  
9 received investments from either the City or the  
10 State. During this time, portion of time between  
11 2012 to really 2021 when there were really these  
12 rapid-fire improvements-- and there's a timeline in  
13 my written testimony that talks more about that. But  
14 in the wake of the pandemic and amid unprecedented  
15 challenges, the change in the mayoral administration  
16 we saw shifting priorities and the urgency that once  
17 drove New York City's integration efforts has really  
18 faded. This slide backward is what makes this  
19 hearing so timely and important. It really-- in 2012  
20 to 2021, we saw these great strides because we were  
21 advancing goals of integration guided by this  
22 definition of the five R's of real integration. The  
23 full definition once again is in my full testimony.  
24 But again, when we said that there was no definition  
25 for integration, we have had one for some time and

2 it's also been used by New York City Public Schools  
3 and created by students. I want to also just take the  
4 time lastly to draw a parallel to the national moment  
5 that we're in right now. From 1954 to 1971 there was  
6 a considerable amount of momentum. This was after  
7 Brown V. Board. But if you look after 1971, there  
8 really isn't any-- there's not-- there's a large gap  
9 of happened until 2012 when we restarted working on  
10 this again. And while I can't account for every  
11 detail of this gap, we must try to acknowledge in the  
12 wake of progress, history often delivers backlash and  
13 we must not let that win once more, not as a city,  
14 not as a school system. We cannot afford another 40-  
15 year lapse where plans are abandoned, goals are  
16 dismissed, community voices are ignored, and the  
17 right to quality education is put on hold. To that  
18 end, we offer a few recommendations for immediate  
19 next steps: To reinvest in comprehensive diversity  
20 planning, much of which was testified and brought up  
21 as success stories today. Fully fund Local Law 225,  
22 and prioritize fairness, transparency, and equity in  
23 all our admissions reforms. Thank you for your time.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

2 MATT GONZALES: Good evening everybody.

3 Thank you Chairs Joseph and Williams for holding this  
4 space for us to talk about school diversity, school  
5 segregation. My name is Matt Gonzales. I'm a former  
6 Special Education teacher, a policy expert on school  
7 segregation, a community organizer, and I also was a  
8 member of Mayor de Blasio's School Diversity Advisory  
9 group between 2017, 2019. I also co-authored a  
10 report that was referenced giving an update last year  
11 on the city's progress on the School Diversity  
12 Advisory Group. And I wrote a testimony, you can  
13 read it. I'm actually going to use my time to correct  
14 a number of pieces of misinformation,  
15 mischaracterizations that I heard sadly and  
16 unfortunately from the Department of Education. One,  
17 you know, as Nyah mentioned, there's really no debate  
18 about whether or not New York City schools remain of  
19 the most segregated. Whether or not their first or  
20 third or fourth most segregated in the country,  
21 they're still at the top of the list, and us being  
22 the most diverse city on the planet is an affront to,  
23 you know, the legacy of the city and the opportunity  
24 that's held there, right? And so, I would really  
25 love to see Mr. Weisberg's metrics and demographics



2 that he is referring to, and I think additionally,  
3 what was deeply disappointing was that it was very  
4 clear that this administration under Eric Adams has  
5 had no coherent strategy nor commitment to address  
6 this issue. And former Chancellor Banks stated  
7 pretty explicitly that this was not a priority. And  
8 look, that is a commitment that administrations are  
9 allowed to make, but the largest concern is that  
10 there has been zero, seemingly zero effort to do  
11 anything in six years related to the goals that Chair  
12 Joseph outlined and discussed, right? 2017, there  
13 were goals articulated. In 2019, the SDAG [sic]  
14 articulated more goals. That has been six years. I  
15 know there was a pandemic. Yet, there has been  
16 nothing done-- there's not been significant action to  
17 move towards those goals, and in fact, as Nyah and I  
18 wrote in our report last year, there have been  
19 policies that have been reinstated like middle school  
20 screens, like other exclusionary admissions that have  
21 perpetuated and that have resegregated the system,  
22 right? So, the idea that the administration wants to  
23 do nothing is-- that's a choice, right? But they  
24 have actually done something to make the problem  
25 worse, right? I mean, we want to be really clear,

2 right? Like, there has been progress, right, but the  
3 progress that we see comes from the amazing school  
4 and district leaders like the ones you heard who are  
5 actively taking the efforts to do the work on the  
6 ground, right? So, there is no coherent citywide  
7 strategy to address segregation. However, because  
8 there is amazing work that was done through the  
9 School Diversity Advisory Group, there is a blueprint  
10 to address segregation and to do it in a way that is  
11 racially just and consistent with the history and  
12 legacy of desegregation that has been harmful, right?  
13 So I encourage you all to review that report, review  
14 our report. There are solutions on the table, and I  
15 hope this City Council can take action, because there  
16 were local laws passed in 2019, and so because we  
17 have mayoral control there's a lot of limitations,  
18 but you all have power to take action on this issue  
19 and to be leaders, because the Trump administration  
20 doesn't care who the mayor is, but we have control in  
21 this city to take power. So, thank you for the time.

22 MATT CHACKO: Hi, good afternoon, Chair  
23 Joseph and Williams. Thanks for your time and to the  
24 City Council. my name is Matt Chacko. And since  
25 1996 my organization, Student Leadership Network, has

2 worked tirelessly to dismantle the inequities that so  
3 many students from underserved communities face as  
4 they strive to reach their highest potential. We  
5 understand the transformative impact of college  
6 education as one of the surest paths to economic  
7 ability for students, particularly the students that  
8 we serve. We, since our history, have put nearly  
9 80,000 students on a path to post-secondary success  
10 and expanded life choices. How do we do that? The  
11 first is through our College-bound Initiative which  
12 is a comprehensive college access and success program  
13 that serves young people across 26 public schools,  
14 Title I public schools here in New York City serving  
15 13,000 students. We place a full-time college  
16 counselor in partner schools to provide year-round  
17 expert college guidance. Each of these counselors  
18 work with families and students collaboratively with  
19 the entire school to build a college-going [sic]  
20 culture to really make sure that every student once  
21 they graduate is on a really great path. Our other  
22 signature programs is our Girl Education model which  
23 we implement through our Young Women's Leadership  
24 Schools which is a network six all-girls public  
25 schools serving young women and gender-expansive

2 youth. They serve 2,400 young people through that  
3 model. Our 12 [sic] schools integrate research-based  
4 practices that cater to the holistic development of  
5 girls into every aspect of the school experience.  
6 This model aims to enhance both academic and socio-  
7 emotional outcomes, and really delivers and  
8 exceptional educational experience for young women.  
9 And so, you know, in this climate of uncertainty as  
10 we face threats to Title I funding, Student  
11 Leadership Network is so grateful to you, Chair  
12 Joseph, for your steadfast support of our schools.  
13 We hope that we can continue receiving support from  
14 the City Council and from the Education Committee.  
15 We really need it. It's an important time for our  
16 young people in this city and we hope that we  
17 continue to work with you. Thank you.

18 ROCHELLE DU: Good evening everyone. My  
19 name is Rochelle Du and today I'm speaking on behalf  
20 of the Integration Coalition, a coalition of various  
21 organizations and advocates formed to further New  
22 York City Public Schools' efforts in addressing  
23 school segregation. With the rise of harmful  
24 national rhetoric and students' wellbeing on the  
25 line, it is becoming increasingly clear that New York

2 City Public Schools and city leaders must continue to  
3 publicly commit towards ensuring that equity, access  
4 and inclusion are centered in policies and practices,  
5 and that they are sustained in order to honor and  
6 uplift the vast diversity present in New York City's  
7 school children. Over the past three years, this  
8 mayoral administration has expanded segregated gifted  
9 and talented programming while ignoring guidance on  
10 adopting schoolwide enrichment models and reinstated  
11 previously paused selection criteria for selected  
12 middle school programs. The transition away from  
13 combatting school segregation holistically is also  
14 present in the constant fight to equitably fund  
15 schools and programming, especially programming for  
16 vulnerable student like multilingual learners,  
17 English language learners, students in temporary  
18 housing and students with disabilities. As of May  
19 2025, the state has approved changes to the  
20 Foundation Aid formula that would result in New York  
21 City schools receiving nearly \$350 million less,  
22 putting at risk many crucial services that New York  
23 City students need like literacy programs and mental  
24 health supports. Meanwhile, funding for initiatives  
25 aimed at advancing school integration is noticeably

2 absent. It has either been quietly abandoned during  
3 the transition between mayoral administrations and  
4 the pandemic such as a modest \$1 million allocated to  
5 support five school districts and developing  
6 diversity plans or slashed outright as seen with the  
7 \$202 million earmarked for a K-12 culturally-  
8 responsive curriculum which was among the first to be  
9 cut in 2022. The Coalition firmly believes that this  
10 administration has not done nearly enough to address  
11 segregation and its harmful consequences. However,  
12 it is also important to acknowledge the policies that  
13 have sustained progress. For example, the changes to  
14 middle school and high school admissions such as the  
15 end of individual high schools ranking student  
16 applicants with no public oversight, as well as the  
17 elimination of inequitable selection criteria for  
18 both middle and high schools like state test scores  
19 and attendance must be protected. Further, we are  
20 encouraged by steps to include diverse curricula  
21 offerings to New York City Public Schools as Hidden  
22 Voices series. With the nation's political climate  
23 changing once again and many students no longer  
24 feeling safe, we as a coalition stress that there  
25 must be additional efforts made to prioritize

2 vulnerable students in enrollment, create the  
3 conditions and accountability structures necessary  
4 for real integration, and develop community outreach  
5 that elevates the voices of parents, students and  
6 community members in decision-making processes. The  
7 Integration Coalition is facilitated by New York  
8 Appleseed and welcomes any questions and can be  
9 contacted at [rdu@nyappleseed.org](mailto:rdu@nyappleseed.org). Thank you.

10 RANDI LEVINE: Thank you for the  
11 opportunity to speak with you. My name is Randi  
12 Levine. I'm Policy Director of Advocates for Children  
13 of New York. The diversity of New York City is one  
14 of its greatest strengths. Our schools educate  
15 children of every race and religion, children born in  
16 places around the globe, children speaking more than  
17 150 languages at home, children with a wide array of  
18 disabilities, children living in shelters and in  
19 brownstones. Yet, as you've heard, New York City is  
20 home to one of the most racially segregated public  
21 school systems in the nation. Beyond the placement  
22 of students, we continue to be alarmed by the  
23 persistent disparities in access to schools,  
24 programs, and educational opportunities as well as  
25 the persistent disparities in educational outcomes

2 for Black and Brown students, students with  
3 disabilities, English language learners, and students  
4 who are homeless or in foster care among other  
5 student populations. Our city should set ambitious  
6 goals for tackling these disparities, disparities  
7 based on race, disability, and ELL status across a  
8 wide array of educational opportunities and outcomes  
9 should approach each initiative program and policy  
10 change with a central focus on students who need the  
11 most support to succeed in school and should tailor  
12 support to ensure its current and new initiatives  
13 meet the needs of different communities and student  
14 populations to ensure all student have meaningful  
15 access and can fully participate in all programs.  
16 With my limited time today, I'm going to focus on  
17 what the administration and the City Council can do  
18 in this next week as you finalize the fiscal year  
19 2026 budget. To help meet some of the most pressing  
20 needs we see on the ground in work with families, we  
21 urge the city to increase funding for the following  
22 initiatives: to provide preschoolers with  
23 disabilities with the evaluation services and classes  
24 they need, as 3K and Pre-K are not for all when more  
25 than 600 children with disabilities are waiting for



2 seats in preschool special education classes, and  
3 more than 7,000 preschoolers are waiting for one or  
4 more service such as speech therapy or counseling.  
5 Our Early Childhood Education programs should not  
6 leave behind the children who need the most support,  
7 and we thank you for fighting for these children and  
8 their families. Increase funding to make more  
9 schools fully accessible, because accessibility  
10 benefits everyone and students with physical  
11 disabilities should have the same school options as  
12 their peers. Funding to expand the Immigrant Family  
13 Communication and Outreach initiative to help ensure  
14 immigrant families can get key information in a  
15 language and mode that works for them. Funding to  
16 enhance services at school-based mental health  
17 clinics to better meet students' behavioral needs and  
18 keep them in school, and funding to ensure that every  
19 student learns to read, because the disparities we  
20 see in reading are unacceptable. As the City moves  
21 forward, it must make sure that all initiatives from  
22 Future Ready to afterschool programs provide the  
23 tailored support that students need to fully access  
24 them. Our written testimony has additional  
25 information as well as some recommendations for the

2 bills. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with  
3 you. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much.  
5 Quick question on the bill you mentioned to-- hold on  
6 a second. Fully fund and implement 2019, Local Law  
7 2025 which called for the establishment of a  
8 Diversity Working Group. Was there a dollar amount  
9 tied to that bill, or no?

10 MATT GONZALES: Is this for the district  
11 Working Groups or for the Citywide Advisory Groups.  
12 They were two different bills. And I--

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: The District-- the  
14 district one.

15 MATT GONZALES: I don't think that they  
16 ever established any-- and I think that was part of  
17 the problem in 2019. They didn't assign any funding  
18 or even any expectations around funding, but we do  
19 have District 15. We do have, like, models of what  
20 that looked like, and as Rochelle mentioned--

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing]  
22 District 13 and Three, right?

23 MATT GONZALES: And there was a million  
24 dollars that was allocated pre-pandemic for five  
25 districts, which was rescinded for the-- you know,

2 because of the pandemic. So, there are models of how  
3 we could calculate what that could cost, and we'd be  
4 happy to work with y'all to figure that out.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Definitely.

6 RANDI LEVINE: Sorry, just want to add  
7 that one of the citywide diversity grant recipients  
8 was District 28. I know that Chair Williams--

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] Chair  
10 Williams.

11 RANDI LEVINE: had talked about District  
12 28, and so that was one of the starting points of  
13 that process was that they receive the citywide  
14 diversity grant funds to create this comprehensive  
15 community process. It got a little spicy--

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] Very.

17 RANDI LEVINE: as time went on. Happy to  
18 talk with you more about that, as I was involved, if  
19 you would like at another time.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: That would be great.  
21 Lara, thank you for this recommendation, and we will  
22 definitely be talking more about this. There's some  
23 good stuff in here.

24 LARA LAI: That's great. Thank you,  
25 Chair.

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You're welcome.

3 LARA LAI: If you have any questions  
4 about the recommendations, happy to discuss as well.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Absolutely. Thank  
6 you so much. Thank you for all of your work. This  
7 is just the beginning. We won't let another 40 years  
8 go by. The next panel is Allison Rosenthal, Heidi  
9 Beth Felix, Athenia Al'bate [sp?]- if I said it  
10 wrong, please forgive me-- Eric Ryan, Antonia Ferrero  
11 Martinelli, Christopher Leon Johnson. You're all  
12 fine. Are we missing someone? If they're in the  
13 restroom, we'll-- is there anyone else that's  
14 testifying? Okay. is there anyone else in the room  
15 that needs to testify? No? Okay. Thank you.

16 ERIC RYAN: Hello, everybody. Thank you  
17 for having me today. I'm just here to support the  
18 bill for the anti-choking devices in New York City  
19 schools. I'm 36 years old, so-- I have muscular  
20 dystrophy. I was lucky enough-- anti-choking devices  
21 weren't around when I was seven years old. And I  
22 always think of this story which makes me, you know,  
23 be in support of the bill. My brother was choking on  
24 a hot dog when we were seven, and my-- we have-- both  
25 of us have muscular dystrophy. And my mom took me

2 out of my-- took my brother out of his wheelchair,  
3 started doing the Heimlich. It didn't work. My dad  
4 who's obviously stronger, got up, turned him upside  
5 down, was hitting on his back, everything-- it wasn't  
6 working. I'm 36 and I remember this like it was  
7 yesterday. He started turning blue, and I mean,  
8 everybody's looking around, like, what do we do.  
9 Luckily-- I don't know he thought of it. My dad  
10 pinched my brother's nose, put his mouth up to his  
11 mouth and literally sucked the hotdog out. I always  
12 think to myself what would I-- I feel like most  
13 people probably wouldn't do that, and without that my  
14 twin brother probably wouldn't be here today. And  
15 then I hear stories-- like myself included. I'll  
16 hear stories from other states where they'll be like  
17 well, you have other options. You can do the  
18 Heimlich. Like, I have two rods in my back, and the  
19 way I sit. If you saw me at McDonalds, you won't  
20 know how to give me the Heimlich, because you can't.  
21 there was an argument once, well, couldn't they just  
22 turn your wheelchair over? This wheelchair is 250  
23 pounds without me in it. So, I just think it's-- I  
24 heard the gentleman from-- I believe he was from the  
25 DOE saying he'd be happy to look at other

2 alternatives. This is my only option. It's not,  
3 like, they could try this, you could try that. The  
4 only way to save me during a choking emergency is  
5 with an anti-choking device. And the one I use is  
6 Life Vac, but I think that's the best one, and  
7 honestly without that I think it would be a problem.  
8 But thank you for hearing me out. Appreciate it.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Of course. Thank you  
10 for sharing your story.

11 ERIC RYAN: And I'm sorry to hear about  
12 your grandfather.

13 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Can I go next,  
14 please? I got to go. Sorry, can I go next, please?  
15 Can I go? Sorry. Alright.

16 ANTONIA L'ABBATE: Thank you so much. My  
17 paper says good morning, but we'll-- good evening  
18 members of the Committee. Thank you for holding this  
19 public hearing to discuss bill 1002-2024. Thank you,  
20 Council Member Kristy Marmorato and Council Member  
21 Vickie Paladino for the introduction of this very  
22 critical bill. Equal First Aid is a not-for-profit  
23 organization that stands with other organizations to  
24 strive for equity, inclusion, and diversity. We  
25 raise awareness and advocate for our most vulnerable

2 population in the event of a choking emergency.

3 There are no policies or procedures currently in

4 place to rescue a person in a wheelchair or a person

5 who may be medically fragile. According to the

6 American Heart Association's written statement to our

7 organization dated November 2023, there are no

8 current recommendations to rescue a person with a

9 disability or who uses a wheelchair from choking. I

10 have it attached here at exhibit A. I am here today

11 as a representative of the many organizations with

12 their support and their blessing, as many could not

13 attend today. Support letters are attached here, too,

14 as exhibit B. Equal First Aid has many advocates

15 testifying in support of this bill today. The Office

16 of People with Developmental Disabilities does not

17 prohibit such devices. I have a letter attached as

18 exhibit C. Our mission at Equal First Aid is to

19 improve people's lives and bring an equal opportunity

20 for all to be rescued in the event of a choking

21 emergency. We believe this bill will bring

22 inclusion, diversity and equity to all. According to

23 the American Red Cross Advisory Council meeting dated

24 June 2023, it states, and I will quote, "If standard

25 first aid for management of choking or foreign body

2 airway obstruction is not effective or feasible,  
3 anti-choking devices may be considered for attempted  
4 relief of airway obstruction." I have that attached  
5 as exhibit E. this bill is a proposal. That is a  
6 step in the right direction to fulfil the obligation  
7 of the Americans with Disabilities Act and to create  
8 an immediate positive impact that will generate peace  
9 of mind for parents. The ADA law mandates reasonable  
10 modifications to a public entity's rules, policies,  
11 and practices. That's attached as exhibit D. to  
12 date, 518 lives with those who have a physical or  
13 intellectual disability have been saved from choking.  
14 Twenty of these lives have been saved either in a  
15 facility, a care home or an organizations. Our  
16 outreach now stands across 12 states. If protocol  
17 fails or it cannot be done, devices are a backup  
18 option. With little cost to the schools, it takes  
19 the place of the million dollar lawsuits filed by the  
20 families of children that have tragically passed.  
21 Please understand that having devices in our schools  
22 does not delay the current rescue protocol. It is  
23 simply another rescue tool when protocol fails and it  
24 cannot be done. Your time in reviewing our support  
25 for bills 1002-2024 is greatly appreciated. Please



2 take the time needed as we need a suction device  
3 where there is no other option to rescue an  
4 individual. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

6 HEIDI FELIX: Good evening. Hello. My  
7 name is Heidi Felix, and I'm really proud and honored  
8 to represent Life Vac. We actually are the  
9 manufacturer of an airway clearance device that is  
10 manufactured here in New York on Long Island. So,  
11 did you know that there's 5,000 choking deaths per  
12 year, and that one child dies every five days? Far  
13 too many. And the idea that it's one of the fourth-  
14 leading causes of unintentional injury deaths in the  
15 United States. So we have a Life Vac that is a  
16 simple, non-invasive, portable, airway clearance  
17 device that's intended to be used in a choking  
18 emergency when standard rescue protocols have failed.  
19 Unfortunately, we know that for the trained  
20 professional that standard protocols, what we know is  
21 abdominal thrusts and back slaps, is only 70 percent  
22 effective. In the lay person's model, it's about 50  
23 percent effective. We do know that those maneuvers  
24 have saved hundreds-- probably over 100,000 lives,  
25 but that's been in effect for a long time. Life Vac

2 is proven to be safe and effective. We have nine  
3 peer reviewed medical studies that show the efficacy  
4 of our device. Life Vac has received 4,196 post-  
5 market clinical reports of lives saved worldwide, and  
6 of which 2,570 were children. Life Vac has been  
7 implemented in 9,326 schools in the United States,  
8 and we've received 89 clinical reports of lives saved  
9 in these U.S.-based schools. Life Vac has partnered  
10 with large companies like McKesson, Cintas, Cardio  
11 Partners. School Nurse Supply is representing us,  
12 along with Philadelphia Insurance Company. They  
13 recommend the airway clearance device that we sell to  
14 their clients. The recent article containing  
15 inaccuracies concerning the FDA and the Red Cross  
16 that was just brought to our attention on Sunday,  
17 Father's Day, we wanted to just bring to the  
18 attention that the FDA Safety Communications  
19 notification stated that if you choose to use an  
20 anti-choking device, only use it after established  
21 rescue protocols have failed. That's exactly what we  
22 teach. When we do our training we say do exactly  
23 what you're trained to do. Do the back slaps. Do  
24 the abdominal thrusts, and then have an anti-choking  
25 device available like Life Vac. Life Vac is

2 consistently working with the FDA to ensure full  
3 compliance with its regulations and guidelines, and I  
4 wanted to just address briefly the statement that was  
5 made by the Department of Education that it's not  
6 that we are not FDA approved. The classification the  
7 FDA gave us is a Class 2. Many of the things that  
8 you see in the school nurse supply is all Class 2.  
9 Things on ambulances, Class 2 medical devices. It's  
10 not Narcan. It's not an epi-pen, and it's not an  
11 AED. So there is a different classification provided  
12 for anti-choking devices. So, the journal for the  
13 American Red Cross that Toni had talked about, the  
14 Scientific Advisory Council-- sorry. I apologize. If  
15 I could address really quick on that. Is that they  
16 did say back blow and abdominal thrusts are a weak  
17 recommendation. They did also make guidelines and  
18 statements stating that anti-choking devices can be  
19 used. We do have that report in there for you. And  
20 then also, there was a third-party independent study  
21 that was done, and we will provide you with that as  
22 soon as it's published. But that was a public health  
23 implication that there are findings that state  
24 significance that there is proven choking incidents  
25 in pediatric and elderly populations. It's not just

2 children, and obviously people with developmental  
3 disabilities. So increasing the awareness and  
4 accessibility of the airway clearance device had  
5 enhanced emergency response efforts, and that will  
6 help us integrate the Life Vac into the first  
7 training programs, and then improve the preparedness  
8 in choking emergencies. So, we believe that Life Vac  
9 should be implemented in all New York City schools as  
10 another option so that you make sure that we can  
11 prevent future choking tragedies. Thank you so much  
12 for your time.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

14 ANTONIA FERRARO MARTINELLI: Hi, good  
15 afternoon, Chair Joseph and the entire Education  
16 Committee. It's a pleasure to be here today with  
17 you. Thank you so much for holding this hearing. my  
18 name is Antonia Ferraro Martinelli, and I am the  
19 parent of three students who have attended New York  
20 City Public Schools. I am currently the President of  
21 the Community Education Council of District 15, and  
22 I'm here today to speak on my own behalf. I sat  
23 before this Education Committee eight years ago to  
24 demand equitable changes to District 15's middle  
25 school admissions policy, and I'm an enthusiastic

2 supporter of the District 15 diversity plan. But  
3 what I really want to talk about today is a blueprint  
4 for lasting change. So when I speak to District 15  
5 parents of young children today, they often have no  
6 knowledge of the D15 diversity plan. They are  
7 shocked to learn that D15 used to screen 11 and 10-  
8 year-old children, and it's a bit ironic to me now  
9 that a highly-debated change that took an entire year  
10 of public engagement is now the norm, and no one is  
11 asking to go back. So that's how lasting change is  
12 made. It's slow. It weighs all the facts, and it  
13 presents the challenge often with large maps and  
14 charts. It takes no voice for granted. It doesn't  
15 make people listened to, it actually enables them to  
16 shape the policy. Some ideas are better than others,  
17 of course, but those better ideas are always child-  
18 centered and support all students. Because of these  
19 lengthy processes like the ones that our district  
20 went through through WXY and our subsequent PAR team  
21 process which we employ to develop a very unique  
22 rezoning model in subzone three. I'm confident we  
23 won't go back, because no one wants to. So lasting  
24 change requires more funding for public engagement  
25 processes from the state, from state and city

2 resources. It's clear that the federal integration  
3 grants will not be available. So we need more New  
4 York State integration projects, project grants and  
5 grants from our City Council and Borough President  
6 office to conduct voluntary race-neutral and  
7 completely constitutional school integration plans.  
8 And I also just want to respond to the APs. I know  
9 APs were spoken about in the hearing and New York  
10 City Public Schools is really gate-keeping access to  
11 AP classes. Understand that the student doesn't get  
12 to choose whether they attend the AP class. The  
13 school chooses the students for those classes. And  
14 just the set up of the school admissions process  
15 means that if you don't have an eighth grade average  
16 of 94.25 to attend a Tier I school, that could be the  
17 difference between getting-- having access to a  
18 calculus class, having access to APs and not. So, we  
19 need APs for all. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I second that. And  
21 that's something we've talked about in depth. AP  
22 classes are not equitable in certain communities, so  
23 we want to change that as well. AP for all. Council  
24 Member Kristy? I forgot, sorry.

2 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Yeah. Yeah,  
3 it's okay. Yeah, hello, Chair Joseph, Chair  
4 Williams, and Chair Marmorato. My name is  
5 Christopher Leon Johnson and I'm here to testify in  
6 support of Intro 1002. I'm here to support this bill  
7 because we need it in the schools. I don't know why  
8 that-- this was never law in the first place. I know  
9 there's people in the schools that need this stuff.  
10 I know there's a lot of people that choke in these  
11 schools, and they're scared of touching other people  
12 because of like HIV and Hepatitis C and all those  
13 type of diseases, and I totally understand that. At  
14 the same time, I'm calling on this City Council to  
15 amend the bill to remove the five-year rule, because  
16 I believe after five years there's going to be no  
17 accountability with this stuff. I don't-- like I  
18 said, I don't know anything about Life Vac, but I see  
19 about counterfeit and stuff like that. So I have a  
20 big feeling that somebody is going to find a way to  
21 steal the contract and once that happens, you remove  
22 the five-year rule, all hell's going to break loose.  
23 So, like I said, remove the five-year rule and make  
24 reporting happen every five years of every year,  
25 every year until the five-year plan, and then make it

2 to where like you have to report it every five years,  
3 because that's-- if you remove the reporting, all the  
4 corruption is going to happen because of no  
5 accountability. So, like I said, I support this bill  
6 100 percent. This should go through. Like I said, I  
7 feel for everybody that has-- don't have the access  
8 to this stuff. It shouldn't be where that we have to  
9 hire-- you have to spend a million dollars out of  
10 pocket to put this up inside the schools. I know  
11 there's certain like private schools that have this  
12 stuff in there and charter schools, but the public  
13 school they just-- it should be common sense.  
14 Another thing is that, like I said, this should go  
15 through City Council unanimously. This is a common-  
16 sense bill. This is a common-- like I said, we got  
17 to remove that five-year rule. Remove the five-year  
18 rule, reporting rule, and I believe it would be more  
19 transparent what's going on, more transparent in the  
20 future. It shouldn't be where that you make a bill--  
21 you create a bill to say, oh, because somebody dies,  
22 passes away after the five-year, people should be  
23 held accountable. But I guess that accountability  
24 starts now. It starts now, like I said. Thank you



2 so much. Enjoy your day. Thank you. Thank you. I  
3 got to go.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much.  
5 Council Member?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Thank you,  
7 Chair. Eric, your story was very touching, and your  
8 father was beyond his intelligence, his means to  
9 just-- to think to do that to try to save your  
10 brother's life was phenomenal. My daughter also did  
11 have a choking incident and that two minutes feels  
12 like an eternity when you feel helpless and you're  
13 trying to do the patting on the back and the Heimlich  
14 and you're not getting any further, and it's very  
15 frightening. So, I understand. Thank you for coming  
16 to testify on behalf of your family and the Life Vac.  
17 So, I just wanted to address Heidi. Can you just  
18 talk about the commitment letter, because I know that  
19 you had made a commitment letter to the schools in  
20 New York City.

21 HEIDI FELIX: [inaudible] that our CEO,  
22 Arthur Lee, he had testified in Madison, Wisconsin  
23 where there was choking death, and families  
24 testified, and the biggest concern is always budget,  
25 right? We don't have the money to spend, and he

2 offered to donate to every school in the United  
3 States that contacted our company. We've donated  
4 7,000. I have the statistics right here. We've  
5 donated over 7,075 free units to schools. We are  
6 making that commitment to New York City that we will  
7 donate one for every single high school, middle  
8 school, elementary school in the public schools.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Thank you.

10 HEIDI FELIX: Absolutely.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: And what about  
12 as far as training to use the devices?

13 HEIDI FELIX: So, one of the-- yeah, one  
14 of the things that I love to address is training,  
15 because it's something that I'm very passionate  
16 about. I think we've talked about this, is that there  
17 is an online training video that is done very well by  
18 a paramedic who happens to be a Fire Captain down in  
19 West Palm Beach. He goes through back slaps,  
20 abdominal thrusts, and when it's not feasible to use  
21 an anti-choking device like the Life Vac, and he goes  
22 through the training on the Life Vac. It's five  
23 minutes. Five minutes to be able to view the video,  
24 to print a certificate that you viewed the video, and  
25 then as well to implement it. We have thousands of

2 people that are laypeople, parents who have purchased  
3 this for their own personal use without any skills,  
4 without any training in medical background, and use  
5 this device successfully to save a life. So the  
6 training is, again, intuitive. It's online. We also  
7 have worked with CPR training companies all  
8 throughout the United States to deliver in-person  
9 training, and I do believe that many of the New York  
10 City Public Schools, as was stated by the Safety  
11 Officer, that there is programs where they train  
12 them. The first step in CPR is clearing the airway.  
13 The way that people are traditionally trained is back  
14 slaps and abdominal thrusts. This is another option  
15 given a pregnant staff member, given someone in a  
16 wheelchair like Eric. Also, think about the large  
17 football player that you can't get your arms around,  
18 right? Or someone who may be frail. Children under  
19 a year old, chest compressions is the first line of  
20 defense, and it's something not everyone feels  
21 comfortable with. So, keep in mind that the training  
22 that we provide is very specific, and it is available  
23 online, but we do have plenty of people who are  
24 willing and able to help and assist in that,  
25 including myself.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Thank you.  
3 Thank you so much. Thank you all for testifying  
4 today. I really do appreciate it, and thank you so  
5 much, Chair, for letting me sit in.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much.  
7 Thank you for sharing.

8 HEIDI FELIX: We appreciate you.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Same here.

10 UNIDENTIFIED: I don't want to forget  
11 about the people on Zoom that are calling in on  
12 support. That would be up?

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yep, they're next.

14 UNIDENTIFIED: Okay, thank you so much. I  
15 don't know if we were--

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] I'll  
17 let them know you're holding them up.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: And just for  
19 the-- unfortunately, I have to leave because I have a  
20 in-district event. So, I will be listening on the  
21 phone on the way home just online. So anybody  
22 testifying online I will be there to hear you. Thank  
23 you so much.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You got it. Thank  
25 you, Council Member.

2 HEIDI FELIX: We are leaving you with a  
3 Life Vac to evaluate, by the way.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now turn to  
5 virtual testimony for virtual panelists. Once your  
6 name is called, a member of our staff will unmute you  
7 and the Sergeant at Arms will put the timer and give  
8 you the go-ahead to begin. Please wait for the  
9 Sergeant to announce that you may begin before  
10 delivering your testimony, and please keep your  
11 testimony at three minutes. First panelist, Kimberly  
12 Chambers followed by Darrin Chambers, Jennifer Glenn,  
13 and Raymond Priebe. Kimberly?

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

15 KIMBERLY CHAMBERS: Hello. My name is  
16 Kim Chambers, and I'm speaking on behalf of my son,  
17 Mavrick Chambers and Maverick's legacy in favor of  
18 bill 1002-2024, requiring portable anti-choking  
19 devices to be placed in New York City schools. I  
20 would like to share with you the story of Maverick's  
21 choking accident and why I believe having a portable  
22 anti-choking device would have saved my son's life.  
23 It was Earth Day in 2022, and I was planting seeds to  
24 celebrate spring with our older children. Maverick  
25 was a curious four-month-old baby and was sitting in

2 his stroller next to us. I was only a few steps away  
3 from him and realized when he coughed that he had a  
4 packet of dried pea seeds open and in his mouth. He  
5 coughed, followed by a sharp inhale causing one of  
6 the seeds to become lodged in his trachea. He  
7 stopped making sounds, and I realized quickly he had  
8 a total blockage of his airway. I am trained in  
9 infant first aid and CPR, and I did not hesitate to  
10 administer aid. I immediately pulled him out of his  
11 stroller and flipped him face down on my arm. I  
12 started back blows and instructed my husband to call  
13 911 and to run across the street to get help from our  
14 neighbor, a New Jersey State Trooper. Within about  
15 90 seconds of Maverick's accident, a trained  
16 professional was providing life-saving aid taught to  
17 him in a professional first responder setting.

18 Additional officers arrived and began CPR to prolong  
19 Maverick's life while waiting for the volunteer EMTs  
20 and ambulance to arrive. They continued to  
21 administer back blows and were able to see the pea in  
22 his trachea, but they could not remove it.

23 Ultimately, the advanced life support team used an  
24 intubation tube to push the pea further into his  
25 airway. At this point, the damage of Maverick's

2 heart and brain was already done. He had been without  
3 oxygen for too long. Although they were able to  
4 stabilize him to transfer him to the hospital, we  
5 lost him later that night. Living without our son is  
6 inescapable pain and longing. Our hearts yearn for  
7 him with every beat. It is difficult to process the  
8 fact that we will never hear him say momma or da-da,  
9 and he will never go to kindergarten or learn to ride  
10 a bike. Excuse me. The only time we can take a  
11 photo with all of our children together is in the  
12 cemetery. I do not want any more parents to  
13 experience a tragic loss like ours because of a  
14 choking accident. I need you to understand that the  
15 response that we received from everyone involved was  
16 impeccable. The officers and EMTs arrived well under  
17 the average response time. Everyone worked together  
18 seamlessly to give Maverick his best chance at life,  
19 and we simply did not have the right tool to save  
20 him. if we or any of the first responders had a  
21 portable anti-choking device to use when back blows  
22 failed, I firmly believe that Maverick's choking  
23 accident would have had a different ending. We would  
24 still be building his life instead of Maverick's  
25 legacy. Installing portable anti-choking devices in

2 schools will give every student their best chance at  
3 surviving a choking emergency. This is not a  
4 replacement for the current protocol, and rather  
5 simply an additional tool to be used to save the most  
6 precious members of our society, our children. Thank  
7 you, and I hope that you choose to be a part of  
8 saving lives when you vote on the progression of bill  
9 1002-2024. Thank you.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Kimberly.

11 Darrin Chambers?

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

13 DARRIN CHAMBERS: there we go. I am  
14 Darrin Chambers, I am the Co-founder of Maverick's  
15 Legacy, a nonprofit my wife Kimberly and I founded in  
16 memory of our son Maverick who was the victim of a  
17 choking accident at nearly five months old in April  
18 of 2022. Through Maverick's Legacy, we're determined  
19 to save lives by advocating for choking awareness and  
20 prevention. I'm here today to express my fierce  
21 support for the implementation of airway clearance  
22 devices in schools. It's crucial to recognize the  
23 importance of having accessible life-saving tools  
24 available in the event of a choking emergency. Over  
25 5,000 people needlessly die due to choking, and 80



1 percent of those deaths are children and teenagers  
2 under 18. In addition, there's over 20,000 non-fatal  
3 ER visits each year for those under 18 which while  
4 not fatal could lead to lifelong permanent injury.  
5 Basic life-saving protocols which improve the  
6 Heimlich and back blows are not always successful,  
7 much more so than many realizing. Depending on the  
8 level of training and the situation, those methods  
9 are anywhere from 50 to 75 percent successful,  
10 leaving a dangerous gap. Airway clearance devices  
11 bridge that gap, significantly increasing survival  
12 rates, and improving outcomes of survival, getting  
13 closer to that goal of 100 percent. It must be  
14 stressed that these devices are not intended to-- or  
15 implied to replace the Heimlich or back-- not as a  
16 standalone device. This way, that proven 50 to 75  
17 percent success rate is maintained and then built  
18 upon to increase the survival rate. When BLS  
19 protocols fail or can't be used, these devices  
20 provide for a fast and effective option to save lives  
21 and reduce injury. They are inherently safe and pose  
22 no additional risk when used with BLS protocols.  
23 Think about it, without it, the victim's going to  
24 die. Protocols fail. With it, the victim have  
25

2 another chance to live, and additional option can  
3 mean the difference between life and death. This is  
4 supported by the American Red Cross Scientific  
5 Advisory Council, who in 2023 updated their guidance  
6 to include this family of devices. They state  
7 directly, "If standard first aid for management of  
8 choking or foreign body airway obstruction is not  
9 effective or not feasible, anti-choking devices may  
10 be considered for an attempted relief of airway  
11 obstruction." These devices have been documented to  
12 save lives. Thousands of people have been saved by  
13 them after BLS protocols failed. Eight lives have  
14 been directly saved due to our efforts with  
15 Maverick's Legacy alone over the last two and a half  
16 years, because we've been out donating these devices  
17 out. One of those saved was in a high school in  
18 Essex County, New Jersey. A 16-year-old boy was  
19 choking on his lunch, and they had three registered  
20 nurses on staff. It was a special needs school.  
21 They had three registered nurses on staff. None of  
22 those three nurses with all of their training--

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Thank you  
24 for your testimony. Time has expired. Thank you.

25 DARRIN CHAMBERS: [inaudible].

2 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: [interposing] Yeah,  
3 if you can wrap up in 30 seconds.

4 DARRIN CHAMBERS: Oh, not a problem. So,  
5 even with all their training, it did not work, and  
6 they used the device we donated, a Life Vac, and they  
7 were able to clear his airway, and he is now with us.  
8 I would trade everything I own in this world right  
9 now to just have one of these available the day of  
10 Mav's accident. So, thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
13 testimony. Jennifer Glenn?

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

15 JENNIFER GLENN: Hello. Thank you so  
16 much for having me. I know it's been a long day for  
17 everybody. I'm coming to you in support of airway  
18 clearance devices in schools. I'm a parent from  
19 Texas, and six years ago I saved my son with a Life  
20 Vac at our home. He choked on a lemon head candy.  
21 My backstory is I've been a teacher for 11 years. I  
22 have CPR training. I'm certified. I tried every  
23 protocol before I remembered that I had this device  
24 I'd never used. So when I got it, on my second pull  
25 it dislodged his candy. I can't tell you what a

2 miracle it was to our family. I've used it on my son  
3 twice now. My daughter used it when I was out of  
4 town on an anniversary trip, and got a watermelon  
5 chunk that was stuck in his throat, when he was at  
6 his grandparent's, out as well. So, two times now  
7 our family has had an amazing result from it. Due to  
8 that, I've advocated around all the towns around our  
9 area to try to help them get Life Vac's in their  
10 school. It's been six years since he choked, and  
11 these devices have been in these schools, some of  
12 these surrounding schools for five years. Last year,  
13 we got a notification that one of the districts we  
14 donated the Life Vac to used it after their protocols  
15 failed to help get a chunk of apple out of a  
16 student's throat. So I can't tell you, like from a  
17 parent's perspective and a teacher's perspective, how  
18 important it is to have another option in your  
19 school, because it doesn't always come up, and I'm  
20 proof of that. These other students are proof of  
21 that. A town 30 minutes away from us last year lost  
22 a little girl at school. She choked in the  
23 cafeteria. Nobody there could save her, and it's a  
24 town that wasn't necessarily small like mine. They  
25 had EMS, everybody who came and nobody could save the

2 child in time. So, coming from me, I really think  
3 you guys need to consider this. It's not-- I'm here  
4 not because I'm from New York, but-- obviously Texas,  
5 but I'm here because every child and every parent  
6 needs this opportunity to have these as a backup plan  
7 when it doesn't go right. And you're going to hear  
8 from people who won't support it who don't even--  
9 who've never used the device. But I for one have  
10 used the device, and I've met so many parents not  
11 that have, too, and it's a godsend for us. So, we  
12 are so thankful. We're so thankful it was invented.  
13 We're so thankful that we had one when we needed one  
14 and we didn't end up a statistic or a sad story. So  
15 we're just really grateful at our household and I'm  
16 grateful that other campuses around-- now that I have  
17 three children in school, that that is there if they  
18 need it if everything else fails. So, I just want to  
19 thank you and please ask that you support this bill.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much for  
21 your testimony. Next up, Raymond Priebe [sp?]. on  
22 deck, Halley Potter, Allen Liu, and Limarys  
23 Caraballo. Raymond?

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.  
25

1  
2 RAYMOND PRIEBE: Hi, good evening and  
3 thank you for taking the time to hear all of our  
4 testimonies. My name is Raymond Priebe, and I'm  
5 going to attempt to explain the events of October  
6 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024 without getting choked up. Forgive me if  
7 I fail. My daughter Mia [sp?] is an amazing girl,  
8 who's overcome more than one battle in her life. She  
9 was born here in Florida, premature, as a drug-  
10 addicted baby weighing three pounds. She spent the  
11 first 32 days of her life detoxing, but don't let  
12 that fool you. She's a strong, determined, stubborn,  
13 and extremely intelligent little girl. Her fourth  
14 birthday was May 10<sup>th</sup>, and she currently weighs 27  
15 pounds. Small, but fierce. On October 20<sup>th</sup> while  
16 driving home from a birthday party, Mia began to  
17 choke on a piece of hard candy. My wife turned and  
18 began to say, "Mia, Mia," with no response. She was  
19 choking. Kristen quickly began finger sweeps to  
20 clear the obstruction with no luck. At that point,  
21 I'd heard the scariest words that a parent can hear,  
22 "Ray, she's not breathing." Excuse me. I pulled the  
23 car over as quickly as possible, ran around to her  
24 side of the car and unbuckled her. With every  
25 passing second, Mia was turning more and more blue.

2 As I pulled her out of the car seat, her eyes looked  
3 locked with mine with a sign of helplessness silently  
4 saying daddy help me. Excuse me. I flipped her over  
5 and began back blow after back blow after back blow  
6 with no avail. I laid her in the grass, praying with  
7 every second as my wife handed the Life Vac. I placed  
8 the mask over her mouth. I pushed, I pulled, and  
9 heard the greatest cry. She's breathing. Mia was  
10 breathing. I could never put in words the feeling  
11 that a parent feels watching their child's life slip  
12 away. That memory, that situation and those minutes  
13 will never leave me.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you. Your time  
15 expired.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much for  
17 your testimony. Halley Potter?

18 HALLEY POTTER: thank you for the  
19 opportunity to testify. My name is Halley Potter and  
20 I'm the Director of PK-12 Education Policy at the  
21 Century Foundation where we conduct research on  
22 education equity. We also run the Bridges  
23 Collaborative, a national network of school systems  
24 committed to integration that includes several New  
25 York City community school districts and charter

1 schools. I'm also a New York City Public Schools  
2 parent. I'm here to emphasize the critical  
3 importance of creating diverse and integrated  
4 learning environments for New York City's youngest  
5 learners, children birth to age five. Research shows  
6 that children of all backgrounds learn more in  
7 racially and socioeconomically diverse preschool  
8 classrooms. These settings also help reduce racial  
9 bias and foster critical thinking skills. Yet, the  
10 City's Early Childhood options even universal  
11 programs remain highly-segregated by race and class.  
12 Half of all children in community-based pre-k  
13 programs are in fairly racially-homogenous settings,  
14 and only one in five are in highly-diverse settings.  
15 At the same time, the City is losing families with  
16 young children who are moving away because the cost  
17 of living and the cost of childcare is too high. We  
18 need policy changes to expand access to diverse early  
19 learning environments and help keep more families  
20 with young children in the City. The City should  
21 take five key steps. First, ensure enough pre-k and  
22 3K seats with extended day options for all families.  
23 Second, fund universal two care, and pilot a program  
24 for non-income tested care for children ages zero to  
25



2 two. Third, simplify systems so providers can blend  
3 different funding streams and integrate classrooms,  
4 shifting administrative burdens to the central  
5 office. Fourth, encourage providers of infant and  
6 toddler care to house both public programs and private  
7 pay seats, requiring blended classrooms. Fifth,  
8 include birth to five programs in broader school  
9 integration conversations, and public demographic  
10 data for all programs, including those operated by  
11 community-based providers. That data is currently  
12 missing from New York City's public school  
13 demographic snapshots. Diversity is key to early  
14 childhood education quality. We must seize the  
15 integration opportunities for young children now and  
16 lay the groundwork for broader integration throughout  
17 our K12 education system and beyond. With all of  
18 these programs now operated through New York City  
19 Public Schools, there is the opportunity for a  
20 coordinated approach. Additional detail is available  
21 in my written testimony. Thank you so much for your  
22 time.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
24 testimony. Allen Liu?

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

2 ALLEN LIU: Hi, my name is Allen Liu. I'm  
3 the Policy Counsel at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund  
4 founded by Thurgood Marshall in 1940 who would become  
5 the country's first Black Supreme Court Justice. I'm  
6 also a proud product of New York City Public Schools.  
7 First, LDF wholly supports and expresses gratitude  
8 for the establishment of Thurgood Marshall Day in New  
9 York which commemorates his birthday and celebrates  
10 the significant contribution to civil rights and  
11 racial justice. Thurgood Marshall called Harlem home  
12 for many of the years he was litigating the country's  
13 most pivotal civil rights cases, including Brown  
14 versus Board of Education, Smith versus Allwright,  
15 and Shelley verses Kraemer. Justice Marshall also  
16 raised sons here and was an active parishioner at St.  
17 Phillips Episcopal. Justice Marshall's and the Legal  
18 Defense Funds ties to New York run deep, and we  
19 enthusiastically endorse the establishment of  
20 Thurgood Marshall Day here in New York. Brown versus  
21 Board of Education stood for the principle that our  
22 constitution guarantees every child equal and fair  
23 access to public schools in this country. Education  
24 is "the very foundation of good citizenship, and  
25 perhaps the most important function of state and

1 local governments.” Over 70 years after Brown was  
2 decided we have made much progress ensuring that all  
3 students [inaudible] students of color, LGBTQ+  
4 student, students with disabilities, immigrant  
5 students, and other historically [inaudible]  
6 populations enjoy equal access to education. We must  
7 be clear this only demonstrates for all of us that  
8 there’s still much more work to be done. Brown calls  
9 upon each generation of Americans to fulfill its  
10 promise. It calls on us to dismantle systemic  
11 barriers to equal opportunity and the vestiges of  
12 legal discrimination. As the guardians of Brown’s  
13 legacy, LDF opposes the false rhetoric that Brown  
14 stood for a so-called colorblind society where race  
15 cannot be considered for any purpose, including for  
16 the purpose of advancing [inaudible]. To be clear,  
17 Brown sought to end the racial cast system  
18 [inaudible] on white supremacy, and it and its  
19 prodigy [sic] clearly hold that race and be used as a  
20 factor to promote equity. New York’s public school  
21 system is the largest and most diverse in this  
22 country, and it is no secret that it is among the  
23 most racially segregated. It is also no secret that  
24 graduation rates for Black and Hispanic student lag  
25

2 behind other students. The same disparities exist  
3 for ELA and math proficiency and access to AP  
4 courses. 57 percent of schools do not have a Black  
5 teacher, and 67 percent of schools do not have a  
6 Hispanic teacher, and New York schools that serve the  
7 highest share of students of color have some of the  
8 highest teacher turnover. Additionally, around 30  
9 percent of all students who removed or suspended from  
10 school were Black, but Black students make up 19.5  
11 percent of the student population. Even worse,  
12 around 40 percent of all students removed or  
13 suspended due to contact with NYPD--

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Thank  
15 you. Your time expired.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much for  
17 your testimony. Next up, Dr. Limarys Caraballo.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

19 LIMARYS CARABALLO: Good evening, Chairs  
20 Joseph and Williams, committee members and members of  
21 the Council. My name is Limarys Caraballo. I'm a  
22 professor and researcher at the Gordon Institute at  
23 Teacher's College Columbia University, as well as the  
24 Co-Director of the Latinidad Curriculum Initiative.  
25 We are so grateful for City Council support in our

2 first year in this initiative which has just been  
3 completed, and for the opportunity to address you all  
4 in regards to the request for continued support for  
5 the next and very important phase of this project.

6 As Cahir Joseph and many other committee and Council  
7 Members have indicated, there's an urgent need to  
8 continue to address inequities in our public schools,

9 and our team understands that students learn by  
10 making connections between new information and what

11 they already know. So, although 42 percent of our  
12 city students identify as having Latinx or Latino

13 heritage, their diverse history, their leadership,  
14 their contributions to these-- to our community and  
15 our city have been under-represented in the

16 curriculum. So, this curriculum initiative is  
17 grounded in commitments to culturally-responsive and

18 sustaining pedagogies and intercultural awareness and  
19 inclusivity and accessibility and intergenerational

20 collaboration to really center these histories and  
21 the way that youth voices and non-dominant community

22 perspectives are important in classroom learning to  
23 lead to success and greater equity. So, our team is

24 really uniquely positioned to continue to lead in  
25 this collaboration among many stakeholders who are

2 deeply engaged and invested in the learning and the  
3 achievement and the post-secondary success of all  
4 students in New York City public schools. In year  
5 one we worked with experts, educators, community  
6 members, and new collaborators. As a matter of fact,  
7 one of the youth who just testified in one of the  
8 advocacy groups, a few groups before us in-person,  
9 and was-- is part of our initiative and consulted  
10 with us and another belongs to the Circle Keepers who  
11 are also testifying today for another cause. So  
12 we've worked collaboratively to include multiple  
13 voices in developing the conceptual framework and the  
14 blueprint for the next two years of the initiative.  
15 The blueprint is now available on our website, as  
16 well as a report that outlines the project and the  
17 work completed during the first year. The blueprint  
18 draws connections between the design principles for  
19 dynamic teaching and learning and our conceptual  
20 framework and all of the resources and materials that  
21 we will curate as part of the project as well as how  
22 we will map them to the existing curriculum and  
23 standards to make sure we have broad implementation.  
24 The blueprint will continue to evolve throughout the  
25 design and implementation phases of the project based

2 on feedback from all stakeholders. So, with the  
3 continued support of the Council, in year two we will  
4 be able to expand our collaboration with educators,  
5 with youth in communities to develop the curriculum,  
6 including an upper-division elective on Latinidad--

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Thank  
8 you. Your time expired.

9 LIMARYS CARABALLO: Thank you so much for  
10 your time.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
12 testimony. Next up, Phil Heimlich followed by Gisela  
13 Rosa, John Carpenter, Regina Cortina, Vivian  
14 Fitzgerald. Phil?

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

16 PHIL HEIMLICH: Thank you. My name is  
17 Phil Heimlich. I'm the son of Doctor Henry Heimlich,  
18 the inventor of the Heimlich maneuver. I'm here on  
19 behalf of myself and my sister Jan Heimlich. I'm also  
20 a former City Council Member, by the way, in  
21 Cincinnati. We are native New Yorkers. My father  
22 practiced surgery at Mount Sinai and Bellevue and  
23 Montefiore and other hospitals. The Heimlich  
24 maneuver was invented by my father 50 years ago, and  
25 I have a google alert every week-- I get it every--

2 actually, almost every day of people who've been  
3 saved around the world by the Heimlich maneuver. I  
4 would estimate I get 40 to 50 clips a week of people  
5 saved by the Heimlich maneuver, and in 50 years-- in  
6 50 years, the only instances that we have seen where  
7 the person-- the maneuver didn't work is where it was  
8 not properly applied. And I have great sympathy for  
9 the Council Member's loss and others, but the fact of  
10 the matter is the only instances we've seen are when  
11 somebody wasn't trained and didn't know how to do it  
12 properly. And my father not only worked to spread  
13 the word about how to save a choking victim, but he  
14 warned against dangerous techniques. One is back  
15 blows. He said do not hit the person on the back,  
16 the victim, because it drives the food deeper. He  
17 also warned about so-called anti-choking devices  
18 which he said are ineffective and can cause injury to  
19 the victim, and the studies all bear this out. The  
20 Food and Drug Administration stated in it's report--  
21 they do not recommend these devices, and the Red  
22 Cross does not recommend these devices. The FDA  
23 stated, "The devices require removal from packaging  
24 and assembly and could delay using established rescue  
25 protocols." The FDA also noted it was aware of



2 problems with these devices including a failure to  
3 resolve a choking incident, bruising around the face,  
4 lips and mouth, and scratches in the back of the  
5 throat. The New York Times reported a study that  
6 showed one of the leading brands which in this case  
7 was Life Vac, "failed to dislodge grapes and cashews  
8 from the body's throat. It could only remove saltine  
9 crackers. With the exception of removing saltine  
10 crackers, all trials were entirely unsuccessful in  
11 removing the choking object. Additionally, these  
12 devices may cause significant pressure and injury to  
13 the oral cavity in a clinical setting." I would urge  
14 the members of this committee and Council to remember  
15 the number four. When a person is choking, they have  
16 four minutes-- in four minutes brain damage or death  
17 sets in, and in four minutes there's no time to go  
18 running to some utility closet for a device which in  
19 many cases doesn't work anyway. I have send you my  
20 written documents, but one of the things I included  
21 was a news story from Tampa, last October, where when  
22 the paramedics arrived the nurse was standing there  
23 holding a Life Vac device saying it doesn't work, but  
24 by that time, the four minutes had passed, the child

2 was unconscious. It was too late to save using the  
3 Heimlich maneuver. Now--

4 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: [interposing] Can  
5 you wrap up in 30 seconds?

6 PHIL HEIMLICH: Sure. My father believed  
7 in education over profits to save lives. My sister  
8 and I urge you to require Heimlich maneuver training  
9 at all schools, but do not put New York's school  
10 children at risk by requiring or recommending these  
11 devices.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much for  
13 your testimony. Next up, Gisela Rosa.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

15 GISELA ROSA: Hi, my name is Gisela Rosa  
16 and I'm [inaudible] Brotherhood Sister Soul. Being  
17 born and raised in New York City, I quickly  
18 understood that where I lived and where I went to  
19 school would determine the quality of life I  
20 received. segregation has deeply affected Black,  
21 indigenous, and communities of color historically and  
22 continues to do so. It has never stopped.  
23 Segregation was never about separate schools, water  
24 fountains, buses, or neighborhoods. It was never  
25 about ensuring safety. It was never about protecting

1 certain groups or cultures. It was always about  
2 upholding white supremacy and control. It was always  
3 about international institutional harm to continue  
4 excluding Black, indigenous, and people of color  
5 access to resources and opportunities. It was about  
6 keeping us marginalized and denying us equal rights,  
7 opportunities, and overall resources. As an Afro-  
8 Latina, a Black woman growing up in Harlem, and  
9 attending public schools in Harlem, I quickly began to  
10 recognize that our schools were underfunded with no  
11 proper resources, limited academic opportunities,  
12 overworked and underpaid teachers, cuts in  
13 afterschool programs and clubs [inaudible] schools  
14 across [inaudible] are funded to local [inaudible]  
15 white communities receive the most funding. Our  
16 community struggle with fewer or resources at all.  
17 And people sit here and blame folks of color for  
18 [inaudible] to attend school. Why would I? why would  
19 we? Constantly giving us scraps and expecting us to  
20 build a life with leftovers, expecting us to pull  
21 ourselves up from our boot straps and create this  
22 quality of life that never existed for us. One thing  
23 Black, indigenous and people of color do receive at  
24 schools compared to their white peers are metal  
25

1 detectors. The message is clear that students of  
2 color are treated as [inaudible] and just people.  
3 And increased police presence [inaudible] Black and  
4 Latinx individuals make up most of the prison  
5 population in America. I wonder why? We often  
6 celebrate the end of slavery and [inaudible]  
7 segregation without considering the origins of our  
8 law enforcement. Historically, these institutions  
9 were established, recaptured, enslaved individuals  
10 who sought freedom. Today, similar mechanisms of  
11 control are evident in our school where over-policing  
12 in communities, disciplinary measures have  
13 contributed to the school to prison pipeline that  
14 disproportionate affects marginalized communities.  
15 Moreover, the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment permits forced labor as  
16 a consequence of incarceration, effectively turning  
17 those behind bars into modern-day slaves.  
18 Ironically, the prison population is predominantly  
19 made up of individuals from the very communities that  
20 are often marginalized, denied equal rights  
21 opportunities and overall resources. And yet again,  
22 no one talks about the impact segregation has on  
23 folks for color's mental health. There's this  
24 expectation of getting over, working harder to get to  
25

1 where you want to be. Segregation has severe mental  
2 health consequences for the BIPOC communities leading  
3 to increased psychological distress, chronic stress,  
4 anxiety and trauma due to systemic racism, economic  
5 [inaudible] and limited access to resources.  
6

7 Research has shown that individuals in segregated  
8 neighborhoods experience 20 to 30 percent higher  
9 anxiety and depression, and only 25 percent of Black  
10 and Latinx individuals in these areas receive  
11 adequate mental healthcare. This disparity is driven  
12 by lack of access to psychiatric services, historical  
13 [inaudible] in the healthcare system and the  
14 compounding effects of environmental and economic  
15 stressors which stem from segregation. The lack of  
16 investment in neighborhoods, specifically our  
17 schools, send a clear message. Our lives, our dreams  
18 and our futures were not priorities. We deserve  
19 better, and it's time for those in positions of power  
20 to act accordingly, act in the power they carry over  
21 our heads. Segregation never truly ended, it simply  
22 evolved. Like Zora Neil Hurston [sp?] said, if you  
23 are silent about your pain, they'll kill you and say  
24 you enjoyed it. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Wow, shout out to  
3 you. Did you breathe? Because-- thank you. But you  
4 got it, okay. Thank you for your testimony.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: With eight seconds to  
6 spare, mind you. Next up, John Carpenter.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

8 JOHN CARPENTER: Good evening. Thank you,  
9 Chair and Committee for hearing my comments. My name  
10 is John Carpenter. I'm here in support of bill 1002-  
11 2024. I nearly died on June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023. A few bites  
12 into dinner on a balmy Friday evening I found myself  
13 choking to death on a piece of steak. It happened so  
14 fast, just like a mousetrap snapping shut. After  
15 several failed attempts at the Heimlich maneuver made  
16 by my wife Lauren, my house guest who was a trained  
17 EMT, myself, and a rather large police officer I knew  
18 I was about to die and so did my wife Lauren. We  
19 locked eyes in exchange for our mutual understanding  
20 of that fact. I'll never forget that feeling. I wish  
21 I could, and I know Lauren does, too. As I was  
22 contemplating how my imminent death was going to play  
23 out, it popped into my head that we actually had a  
24 Life Vac choking rescue device in the house. Lauren  
25 had seen one given as a gift at a baby shower the

2 previous fall, and she was impressed and decided to  
3 purchase one for us and each of our children's  
4 families. Lauren gave them to us as Christmas gifts,  
5 and I remember thinking at the time that it wasn't  
6 much of a gift, and it's funny how wrong one could  
7 be. Although we had opened it and read the-- opened  
8 it and read the directions when we acquired it, and  
9 it wasn't stored accessibly in the kitchen, Lauren  
10 knew exactly where it was. I remember her tearing up  
11 the stairs to retrieve the device and almost  
12 immediately stomping back downstairs while calling  
13 out, "I have to read the instructions." I was busy  
14 trying not to panic and stay conscious. I'd probably  
15 been about three minutes without oxygen by then.  
16 Fortunately, the instructions were short and simple.  
17 Quickly, Lauren was coming at me with the device. On  
18 the second attempt she cleared my airway enough for  
19 me to get some air. If we hadn't had the Life Vac  
20 and Lauren had not had the composure and courage to  
21 employ it successfully, under the most desperate  
22 circumstances, I certainly would have died, and I  
23 would never have had the chance to meet two of my  
24 grandsons who were born in the last two years. I'm  
25 grateful for Life Vac, grateful for Lauren who showed

2 such fierce courage under the most terrifying  
3 circumstances. Together, they saved my life. Without  
4 Life Vac, I most certainly would have died on June  
5 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Thank you for listening.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
8 testimony. Regina Cortina?

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

10 REGINA CORTINA: Thank you. Thank you so  
11 much for hearing me this evening. I know it's been a  
12 very long afternoon for you. I want to talk to you  
13 about the Latinx curriculum initiative. I think  
14 Council Joseph you were there yesterday when we were  
15 launching the report, and I would like to talk a  
16 little bit about what we have been doing and follow  
17 [inaudible]. I'm a professor of education at  
18 Business [sic] College. I would like to explain to  
19 you how our project addresses inequalities in access  
20 to quality education. We do this by offering  
21 resources to help teacher's recognize who their  
22 students are [inaudible] the school experience for  
23 children and youth of all backgrounds so that they  
24 can proceed through graduation and onto college. By  
25 providing a curriculum framework that's helped



1 learners of all ages understand and appreciate their  
2 own history, culture, and valuable contributions of  
3 Latinas and Latinos. Our curriculum will deepen  
4 academic interest and engagement of students from  
5 these communities. The curriculum is good for New  
6 York City because it provides a more comprehensive  
7 understanding of the dynamics of this place where we  
8 live. The Latina Curriculum Initiative team will  
9 expand academic content related to Latinidad across  
10 subject areas and grade levels over the coming years.  
11 Our team is creating a practical guide for teachers  
12 to teach about history and communities that have not  
13 yet been adequately included in the public curricula.  
14 We have already developed sample lessons that explore  
15 the multiple experiences of Latinx in our city. Only  
16 nine percent of teachers nationally are Latinx. So  
17 resources to teach about Latinidad are helpful not  
18 only through my [inaudible] student's engagement, but  
19 also to help with professional learning development  
20 and retention of teachers trying to implement  
21 responsive pedagogies [sic]. Our report, the need  
22 for [inaudible] the study of Latinidad in New York  
23 City Public Schools [inaudible] Council is in our  
24 website now, and we have also compiled a list of New  
25

2 York City author that have written about the  
3 experience growing up as Latinos in the City, and--

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Thank  
5 you. Your time expired.

6 REGINA CORTINA: Thank you very much.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
8 testimony. Vivian Fitzgerald?

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

10 VIVIAN FITZGERALD: Hi, my name is Vivian  
11 Fitzgerald, and I'm in support of having Life Vac in  
12 [inaudible] public schools-- New York City Public  
13 Schools. I am well aware of the safety procedures  
14 that happen. I'm part of the GP [sic] and all that  
15 kind of things. I will not-- would not be here today  
16 if it wasn't for the Life Vac machine. My-- I had a  
17 choking incident in my home. My son was with me who  
18 is trained in the Heimlich, who did the Heimlich  
19 twice unsuccessfully. I remembered that we did have  
20 the Life Vac here. It was a gift, because I have  
21 elderly parents that lived with me. It was in a  
22 package, original package. I-- I handed it to my son,  
23 and I could joke about this now, because my son  
24 handed back to me and said what do I do with this?  
25 It was so simple to assemble. It took a matter of

2 seconds. I was able to do it to myself, which is also  
3 a big, big deal because if you're home alone and  
4 you're choking and nobody's there to give you the  
5 Heimlich, this is definitely something that works. I,  
6 again, while my son did the Heimlich, I did the  
7 procedure to my-- I put the device to my face and did  
8 it to myself, and the first time it didn't happen.  
9 My son did the Heimlich again. Again, nothing was  
10 happening. I did it a second time and everything came  
11 up. I threw everything up and I was able to breathe.  
12 I tell everybody that they need this device. It needs  
13 to be in the public schools. It should be everywhere  
14 where anybody is eating. It undoubtedly saved my  
15 life. It shouldn't be the only thing, but it is  
16 definitely something that would save your life, and  
17 definitely something that you can do on your own in  
18 case you're choking by yourself. Again, as a city  
19 school teacher, if that would have happened at  
20 school, I would have-- I wouldn't be here to talk to  
21 you today if it happened in the school. And I  
22 honestly carry one with me in my car just in case  
23 it's needed anywhere I go. It's something-- like I  
24 said, I can't even express how important it is for  
25 this device to be in addition to anything else in the

2 school. New York City schools, they're big. Their  
3 kids are constantly eating. I'm in the middle  
4 school. The kids are constantly snacking. It could  
5 happen at any moment at any time in a school, and it  
6 really needs to be passed, considered, and put into  
7 the school. Again, I have one in my car. God forbid  
8 something should happen in my school, I would run out  
9 and get one if I knew about it. But the code blue,  
10 by the time you go through everything, if that Life  
11 Vac isn't part of where the AED is or somewhere where  
12 somebody knows where it is can grab it regardless of  
13 the emergency, that really should also be part of the  
14 protocol, is it for it to be grabbed, like I said,  
15 when they run to the-- to whatever the code blue is.  
16 That device should go, too, in case it is a choking  
17 incident so there's no time to waste. Everyone-- I  
18 don't even know what else to say. Like I said, I  
19 almost died in October. I am a true believer in this  
20 product. It is absolutely necessary to have. And  
21 like I said, I wouldn't be here without it.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
23 testimony. That concludes our virtual testimony.

24 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you. I just  
25 wanted to-- you want me to close out? Okay, great.

2 I just wanted to thank everyone that testified and  
3 sharing their stories. Our condolences to all the  
4 folks that were lost. I actually just lost a friend  
5 to a choking incident on Mother's Day. She choked in  
6 front of her seven-year-old child like a couple weeks  
7 ago. So I truly sympathize and empathize with all of  
8 the testimonies today. And with that, this hearing is  
9 closed.

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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION WITH COMMITTEE ON HUMAN & CIVIL RIGHTS

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date July 23, 2025