

1 COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH JOINTLY WITH  
2 THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION 1

3 CITY COUNCIL  
4 CITY OF NEW YORK

5 ----- X

6 TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

7 Of the

8 COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND  
9 YOUTH JOINTLY WITH THE  
10 COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

11 ----- X

12 November 17, 2025

13 Start: 1:10 p.m.

14 Recess: 4:49 p.m.

15 HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

16 B E F O R E: Althea Stevens,  
17 Chairperson for the Committee on  
18 Children and Youth

19 Rita Joseph,  
20 Chairperson for the Committee on  
21 Education

22 COUNCIL MEMBERS:

23 Eric Dinowitz  
24 James F. Gennaro  
25 Jennifer Gutiérrez  
Shahana K. Hanif  
Kamilah Hanks  
Shekar Krishnan  
Linda Lee  
Farah N. Louis  
Mercedes Narcisse  
Pierina Ana Sanchez  
Lynn C. Schulman

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION 2

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

Nancy Ginsburg  
Deputy Commissioner, ACS

Chris Tricarico  
Senior Executive Director of Office of Food and  
Nutrition, NYCPS

Meredith McDermott  
Chief Sustainability Officer, NYCPS

Shareef Rashid  
Principal of Passage Academy, NYCPS

Glenda Esperance  
Superintendent, NYCPS

Danasia Boone  
OPWDD

Katelyn Greco  
COFCCA

Melinda Andra  
Legal Aid Society

Anna Arkin-Gallagher  
Brooklyn Defender Services

Rohini Singh  
Advocates for Children of New York City Council

Darek Robinson  
Social Services Employees Union

Sharlena Clough  
Self

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THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION 3

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

Belkys Rivera  
Self

Melissa Accomando  
Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem

Alexandra Rapisarda

Dr. Jackie Cody  
Self

Mary Merkel  
Self

Lorraine Gittens-Bridges  
Self

Katelyn Greco  
COFCCA

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THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION 4

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good afternoon. This is a microphone check for the Committees on Children and Youth jointly with Education. Today's date is November 17, 2025, located in the Chambers, recording done by Pedro Lugo.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: We are about to begin. Everyone please settle down. We are about to begin.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good afternoon and welcome to today's New York City Council hearing on the Committee on Children and Youth joint with Education. At this time, we ask that everyone silence all electronic devices. If you would like to testify, please see the Sergeants at the back and fill out a slip.

If you would like to - have any questions throughout this hearing, please see one of the Sergeant at Arms and no one is to approach the dais.

Chairs, we are ready to begin.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: [GAVEL] Good afternoon. I'm Council Member Althea Stevens, Chair of New York City Council Committee on Children and Youth. I am joined by my Council Member and comrade Rita Joseph, Chair of the Committee on Education for today's joint

hearing on Educational Access in New York City  
Juvenile Detention Centers.

In addition to today's oversight topic, we are  
also looking forward to hearing the following  
legislation, Intro. 987, sponsored by Council Member  
Joseph in relation to a pilot program to develop a  
distribution of educational materials regarding the  
surplus of food in public schools.

Reso. 1017, sponsored by Council Member Joseph in  
relations to calling on the state to pass and the  
Governor to sign legislation to compile the bills to  
establish a citywide educational leadership team.

Reso. 1018, also sponsored by Council Member Joseph.  
She has all the bills today, calling on the state to  
pass and Governor to sign legislation requiring each  
district leader team and school leadership team to  
include one student representative as a member of  
such teams within New York City Public Schools. I  
love that one. I don't think I'm on it. Please add  
me to that.

Uhm Reso. 1019 sponsored by Council Member Joseph  
also, calling on the state to pass and the government  
to sign to require the district leaders teams  
operating under open meeting law requirements.

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Uhm, Reso. 842 sponsored by Council Member Joseph, in relation to recognizing the month of March annually as music in our schools month in the City of New York. As the youth in the city's detention in placement centers continue to increase. We must stay focused and provide every youth with consistent, high quality education. And I know these numbers are increasing our juvenile detention center but it is important for us to make sure that we are working on getting these numbers down. Because I say this very often that any child that's in detention, we all as adults in this room have already failed. So, we also need to make sure we're keeping our eye on making sure kids do not end up here but in the meantime, it is deeply troubling that according to recent letters from Legal Aid Society, nearly 100 youth have on any given day been left unhoused. Meaning, they are locked in assigned room and are forced to sleep in classrooms, hallways, visiting areas and other shared common space.

Not only do those young people endure an unsafe and crowded sleeping conditions, but the use of classroom space as sleeping courters directly interfere with the instruction for both unhoused

youth and their peers. Additionally, both youth attending - because youth attending school with their cohorts they are housed with, it is unclear whether unhoused youth are being consistently included in the classroom instruction.

We've also heard from far too many public defenders that young people who want to attend school are simply not being given - being taken to class, whether it's due to short staffing, a lack of available classroom space or other operational challenges, the result is the same. Youth are being denied the education access they are legally entitled to.

Furthermore, advocates and legal service providers have raised concerns about the gaps and passages instruction, including staffing shortages, outdated or insufficient classroom technology. They also report on the lack of specialists, including special education teachers, counselors, speeches and occupational therapists, leaving many students with the support they are legally entitled to.

We must ensure that academic pathways to graduations are recognized as essential and not overlooked. Youth have clear opportunities to pursue

1  
2 credentials and skills that align with their  
3 strength, interest and long term goals. With the  
4 right instruction, tutoring and academic support,  
5 youth in custody can succeed but only if we provide  
6 real, reliable pathways that set them up for success  
7 once they return to their communities.

8 Our goal today is to understand the barriers to  
9 deliver education in detention centers, as well as  
10 youth in close to home placement. And identify  
11 solutions that led to meaningful stable - sustainable  
12 outcomes.

13 I look forward to productive conversation with  
14 the Administration on how they can address the  
15 concerns raised by providers and the strategies they  
16 are developing to strengthen passages, academics, and  
17 support young people successfully reentering society.

18 Now, I would like to turn it over to my Council -  
19 to my colleague Rita Joseph for her opening  
20 statement.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you Chair Stevens.  
22 Good afternoon. Council Member Rita Joseph, Chair of  
23 the Committee on Education. I am pleased to join  
24 Committee on Children and Youth and its Chair Stevens  
25

for today's oversight hearing on educational access  
in New York City's Juvenile Detention Centers.

Justice involved students have a right to  
education. Research consistently shows that engaging  
in meaningful education activities, job training, and  
social, emotional support is linked with reducing  
reincarceration rates and strong reentry outcomes.

A high quality education is not a privilege. It  
is one of the most effective tools we have for  
rehabilitation, economic stability, and community  
safety. Yet, that is the educational programming  
within New York City's juvenile detention facilities  
is fragmented, inconsistent, and the consequences  
for youth are severe.

Disrupted learning make it significantly harder  
for youth to earn credits, graduate high school, or  
transition successfully back into the community  
placement or home schools. It also significantly  
increases likelihood of reincarceration.

An April 2025 audit by State Comptroller found  
that youth at New York City's Horizon and Crossroad  
Juvenile Detention Centers missed between 13 and 73  
percent of scheduled school days. This is an

extraordinary range that reflects a system breakdown  
in access to education.

It has also found that only a fraction of  
students entitled to special education services  
receive them, most of whom were chronically absent.  
Additionally, the Committee has heard concerned  
reports, broken classroom technology and staffing  
shortages that routinely prevented youth from  
attending classes for weeks at a time. This is  
unacceptable. Every day a child is denied a quality  
education is a lost opportunity for growth.

Today, we'll hear from New York City Public  
Schools, ACS, and other interested stakeholders, and  
the Committee will ask, what barriers continue to  
hinder meaningful educational access for youth in  
detention? How is the Administration addressing  
operational failures that directly disrupt  
instruction, and most importantly, what steps are  
needed to ensure that every young person in New York  
City regardless of their involvement with the justice  
system, receive the education they are legally  
entitled to?

Thank you to the members of the Committee on  
Education who have joined us today. I would also

1  
2 like to thank Committee Staff Alejandro Carvajal,  
3 Chloe Rivera, Katie Salina, Andrew Lane-Lawless, and  
4 Grace Amato, as well as my Chief of Staff Juvanie  
5 Piquant and Joel Desouve for their work on today's  
6 hearing.

7 Thank you Chair Stevens, I turn it back over to  
8 you.

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I would like to acknowledge  
10 Council Member Williams, Dinowitz, Menin, Ossé on  
11 Zoom, Hanif on Zoom, and Louis, who have joined us at  
12 today's hearing so far. I will turn it over  
13 Committee Staff to swear in the first panel.

14 COMMITTEE STAFF: Hi, please raise your right  
15 hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole  
16 truth, and nothing but the truth before this  
17 Committee and to respond honestly to Council Members  
18 questions Glenda Esperance?

19 GLENDA ESPERANCE: I do.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Shareef Rashid?

21 SHAREEF RASHID: I do.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Meredith McDermott?

23 MEREDITH MCDERMOTT: I do.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chris Tricarico?

25 CHRIS TRICARICO: I do.

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COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And Nancy Ginsburg?

NANCY GINSBURG: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. You may begin.

NANCY GINSBURG: Good afternoon. My name is Nancy Ginsburg and I am the Deputy Commissioner for the Division of Youth and Family Justice at the Administration for Children Services. My role includes overseeing ACS's secure detention facilities Horizon and Crossroads. I want to thank Chair Stevens, Chair Joseph, and the Members of the City Council of Children and Youth and Education Committees for holding today's hearing. We are pleased to be here today along with our colleagues from New York City Public Schools to testify about educational access in our detention facilities.

Education is essential for young people to recognize and reach their full potential. Prior to coming to ACS, education for court involved youth was a primary focus of my career. Since coming to ACS, I have prioritized strengthening educational opportunities and outcomes for the young people in detention.

As their testimony explains in more detail, Passages Academy within New York City Public Schools

1 provides the education on site in our secured  
2 detention facilities. Passages Academy, focuses on  
3 engaging our young people in academics, and social,  
4 emotional learning. Providing them with the critical  
5 knowledge and skills they need to succeed in life. I  
6 want to take a moment to thank the teachers,  
7 counselors, and school leadership at passages for all  
8 they do each and every day to unlock the promise  
9 within our students in detention.  
10

11 It is a true partnership each and every school  
12 day. New York City Public Schools is responsible for  
13 educational assessment, classroom instruction, and  
14 curriculum. ACS is responsible for encouraging and  
15 escorting youth to school, enhancing educational  
16 services with tutoring services, after school  
17 programming, conducting psycho social assessments  
18 through our partners at Bellevue, which can inform  
19 our approach to engaging youth and vocational  
20 training, as well as, arranging for and supporting  
21 opportunities for a college education.

22 I think it is important to set some context,  
23 which informs our approach to engaging each young  
24 person academically. This morning, there are 335  
25 young people in secure detention, 170 in Crossroads

1  
2 and 165 in Horizon. Seven years into the  
3 implementation of the Raise the Age Law, the juvenile  
4 detention centers now hold an older population than  
5 in the past. While we encourage all young people in  
6 detention to attend school, many are older than  
7 compulsory school age, which in New York City, runs  
8 through the end of the school year a student turns  
9 17, measured at July 1<sup>st</sup> and are no longer legally  
10 required to attend school. Approximately 40 percent  
11 of the youth in detention are 18 or older.

12 Many young people in detention were disconnected  
13 from or behind in school prior to entering detention.  
14 Passages Academy students attended school only 44  
15 percent of scheduled school days, prior to being  
16 admitted to detention and 94 percent of the students  
17 were chronically absent prior to Passages enrollment.

18 These students are very far behind with few, if  
19 any, credits, and some youth have not been to school  
20 at all in months or years. As such, school  
21 attendance and success is a process of continuous  
22 engagement with our young people. Listening to their  
23 goals and needs and not always a linear process. We  
24 are doing everything we can to meet our young people  
25 where they are and attempt to engage them in an

academic study in a way that makes sense to them, and best positions them for success, while they are negotiating court appearances, sentencing negotiations, and separation from their families.

A key component of our work is engaging or reengaging youth in education. As a result of the Raise the Age Law, the youth in detention have longer lengths of stay, often because of their court processing times related to highly complex cases, which provides more opportunity to engage youth in successful, educational pathways.

We have seen over 100 students graduate from middle and high school and attain their GEDs in the last three years.

ACS has embarked on a robust and intentional plan to create an environment that embraces and supports education. Since the 2022-2023 school year, ACS built an internal education team in secure detention by recruiting youth development specialists to serve as school liaisons who support the attendance and school participation of youth. We have created non-uniform education associate positions to support students and improve communication and coordination between ACS and Passages and added a senior education

coordinator to facilitate college programming and  
workforce opportunities.

ACS's school-based team is yielding significant  
improvements in student engagement, school  
attendance, exam completions, and graduation rates.  
These efforts have helped to change the culture,  
building facility-wide enthusiasm in support of  
education. ACS has continued to strengthen this work  
through the consistent integration of supplemental  
academic intervention and post-secondary  
opportunities, including academic tutoring, credit-  
bearing college course, and career coaching.

Tutoring is beneficial for many of our young  
people in detention, specifically those who are  
preparing for a GED exam, a Regents exam, or who have  
low literacy or math skills. ACS's contracted  
workforce partners, the Children's Village, CV, and  
the Bard Prison Initiative, BPI, provide onsite  
tutoring four days a week for 40-50 youth during the  
school day, after school, and on holidays.

Tutors typically work with youth twice a week in  
sessions that last from 30 to 60 minutes, targeting  
specific areas identified through assessments and GED  
practice exams. Tutors consistently work with the

1 same students building strong relationships that  
2 support the academic achievement of the youth. CV  
3 and BPI collaborate closely with the Passages Academy  
4 Administrators and the ACS education team to identify  
5 youth and subject areas in which they need additional  
6 support or individual assistance to prepare for  
7 Regents or GED exams. Creating an opportunity for  
8 one on one learning with an adult whom they trust is  
9 particularly helpful for young people who have not  
10 had success in traditional school environments and  
11 addresses a wide range of learning styles. During  
12 the first month of school this year, tutors provide a  
13 331 tutoring sessions lasting 30 minutes or more.

14 As the population in secure detention  
15 accommodates a larger percentage of emerging adult  
16 students there are now increased opportunities for  
17 high school equivalency options and college courses.  
18 ACS and New York City Public Schools work  
19 collaboratively to adapt classroom spaces into  
20 computerized testing sites, physically retrofitting  
21 the space to allow the administration of GED exams.  
22 Since this advance, many youth have obtained their  
23 GED diplomas and many more are currently completing  
24 the GED testing requirements. In addition, we now  
25

offer high school equivalency programs in the evening hours from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., after the end of high school classes in order to ensure maximum access to academic programming.

Just prior to the 2024-2025 school year, an MOU was signed between CUNY and ACS and we are now in the second year of this relationship. Graduates in Horizon are enrolled with Hostos Community College and in Crossroads, with Borough of Manhattan Community College, completing in person college courses while in the secure detention facilities and earning transferable college credits. This fall, we have 53 students enrolled in college classes with a total of 148 students who have been enrolled in college classes while in detention. Students have enjoyed engaging in a range of college classes, including Introduction to Anthropology, Introduction to Criminal Justice, Fundamentals of Public Speaking, Introduction to Sociology, Language and Power, and Introduction to Critical Thinking.

In addition to formal education, ACS has strengthened programming options, both to keep young people engaged and to broaden the depth of their experiences and opportunities for learning. The

current programming menu includes incentive programming associated with the behavior management system, programming to prepare young people for the workforce, and programming that supports personal development, in addition to diverse arts, recreation, and life skills options.

Of particular importance for this hearing, the Workforce Development programming in place in both facilities through our partnerships with Children's Village and Bard Prison Initiative, delivered career exploration, work and labor market readiness, vocational training, and trade certifications to youth in the facility in the form of structured programs and individual coaching.

The benefits of these partnerships are evident in the expanded and improved programs offered in conjunction with summer youth employment. Where youth are earning certifications and developing marketable skills and trades. With the instruction of a skilled teacher and trades person, residents are earning certifications in Spackling, Taping, and Painting, then practicing their skills within the facility. Other workforce oriented programming includes a fashion and design entrepreneurship

1  
2 program, OSHA, culinary, architecture, electrician,  
3 barbering, and aesthetician courses, and the popular  
4 Barista program. These thoughtful programs which  
5 allow detained youth to gain meaningful work  
6 experience, explore new industries and trades, and  
7 acquire marketable skills and certifications, are at  
8 the forefront of best practices for emerging adults.

9 In 2021, the city and ACS voluntarily entered  
10 into an agreement with the Nunez Monitoring Team to  
11 assess the conditions of confinement at Horizon  
12 Juvenile Center after Raise the Age implementation.  
13 This month, in its most recent report filed with the  
14 court, the Nunez monitor found ACS to be in  
15 substantial compliance with the remaining provisions  
16 of the agreement. Further, the monitor recommended  
17 to the court that the voluntary agreement is no  
18 longer needed for ACS at the Horizon Juvenile Center,  
19 noting that it appears that the Monitoring Team's  
20 work with ACS is complete.

21 Specifically, the Monitor stated, "The various  
22 reforms implemented by ACS have decreased violence  
23 and improved safety and have showcased ACS's and  
24 facility leadership's commitment to design and  
25 sustain a durable vision for the facility's operation

1  
2 that addresses youth's individual needs and supports  
3 the staff who work at Horizon. Fundamentally, the  
4 Monitoring Team's goal is to become unnecessary and  
5 ACS has demonstrated its internal capacity to  
6 identify and address its problems and challenges  
7 without the need for external oversight.

8 Now that ACS has achieved substantial compliance  
9 with the three final provisions in the fourth  
10 voluntary agreement, it appears the monitoring team's  
11 work with ACS is complete.

12 With regard to education, the Monitors Report  
13 states, "Similarly, ACS has made new investments to  
14 support the youth's academic needs." We are grateful  
15 for the assistance that we have had from the Nunez  
16 Monitoring Team and are extremely pleased that in  
17 recognition of the efforts and outcomes we have  
18 achieved, they have informed the court that their  
19 monitoring assistance is no longer needed.

20 These accomplishments are due to the efforts of  
21 our detention leadership and our hardworking staff  
22 and I am tremendously appreciative of the work they  
23 do each and every day.

24 In conclusion, I would like to take a moment to  
25 thank all the ACS and New York City Public School

1  
2 staff who spent each day changing the life  
3 trajectories for the youth in detention. Their  
4 commitment to these young people is inspiring. Thank  
5 you.

6       GLENDAS ESPERANCE: Good afternoon Chair Rita  
7 Joseph, Chair Althea Stevens, and all the members of  
8 the Committee on Education and Children and Youth  
9 here today. My name is Glenda Esperance and I'm the  
10 proud Superintendent of District 79 schools and  
11 Alternative Schools and Programs in New York City  
12 Public Schools. I'm joined by Shareef Rashid, one of  
13 the Principals of Passages Academy, my Deputy  
14 Superintendent Jerry Brito, as well as another  
15 Principal from Passages, as well as other colleagues  
16 from New York City Public Schools and the  
17 Administration for Children Services, also known as  
18 ACS.

19       I'm pleased to be here today to discuss our work  
20 to provide high quality educational programming in  
21 youth detention facilities and I thank the Council  
22 for your continued support of our students.

23       District 79 - I'm sorry, I just got to try to  
24 move this over. Okay, District 79 is a reimagined  
25 citywide district that serves approximately 50,000

1  
2 students annually across 365 sites. Our ten distinct  
3 programs are designed to meet the needs of students  
4 who have been disconnected from traditional  
5 schooling. Those include certification opportunities  
6 at Coop Tech, adult education courses citywide, LYFE  
7 supports for our student parents, pathways to  
8 graduation, Restart Academy, and our youth justice  
9 programs. All of our initiatives are tailored to  
10 provide a pathway to academic success, social-  
11 emotional growth, and post-secondary readiness.

12 Our mission is clear, we work collaboratively to  
13 help students earn high school diplomas, HSE's and  
14 CTE certification, leveraging resources to build  
15 college and career readiness. In the process, we  
16 nurture the confidence of our students, so they are  
17 equipped with the skills needed to thrive in society.  
18 This mission is especially critical for our students  
19 in detention centers, where the stakes are even  
20 higher and the barriers more complex.

21 As someone born and raised in Brooklyn to  
22 immigrant parents, and a proud product of New York  
23 City Public Schools, I bring over 40 years of  
24 experience at this work as student, Special Education  
25 Teacher, Adult Education Teacher, Literacy Coach,

Assistant Principal, Principal, Director of School Quality, Director of Special Education and Superintendent. My roles have given me insight into the challenges of teaching and learning across various educational settings. I know firsthand the barriers students face in detention centers and I believe deeply in their potential.

It is my belief that providing high-quality instruction to detained and incarcerated youth is not only a legal obligation, it is a moral one. We are consistently investing time and hard work to improve our services, recognizing that traditional models don't work at detention facilities. So, we offer students flexibility to ensure successful outcomes in a variety of settings. D79 operates two programs in detention settings: East River Academy, in partnership with DOC and Passages Academy, in partnership with ACS. These programs provide students with access to rigorous instruction, social-emotional supports, and transition planning. Our educators include certified teachers, counselors, and support staff to deliver instruction aligned to state standards and tailored to the unique needs of our students.

1  
2 Today we look forward to providing additional  
3 insight about Passages Academy, which we managed in  
4 partnership with ACS. Passages Academy operates  
5 across seven sites, serving youth in both secure and  
6 non-secure detention and placement settings. Each  
7 location is designed to meet the specific needs of  
8 its student population, offering full-day instruction  
9 from licensed teachers and counselors.

10 Students in non-secure settings attend community-  
11 based sites, while those in secure facilities receive  
12 onsite education. At Passages, we ensure that  
13 students can make academic progress, earn credits,  
14 take Regents exams, and maintain continuity in their  
15 education. Smaller class sizes allow for  
16 personalized instruction that support both academic  
17 and social-emotional development. Importantly,  
18 students remain part of the New York City school  
19 system, preserving their right to return to their  
20 home school upon release.

21 We also prioritize family engagement through two  
22 full-time parent coordinators and a family and  
23 community engagement liaison. We help facilitate  
24 family days and parent teacher conferences. So,  
25 since the beginning - I'm sorry, since becoming

1  
2 Superintendent three years ago, I've been intentional  
3 about strengthening our educational services and  
4 putting the academic and social needs of our students  
5 first.

6 Transition planning begins the moment a student  
7 arrives at Passages Academy. We have designated so  
8 much so that we've invested and designated a  
9 Transition Administrator to oversee this work,  
10 ensuring that students receive consistent support  
11 from Social Workers and Guidance Counselors, as they  
12 prepare to reintegrate into their communities.

13 We've also been intentional over the past three  
14 years to add two additional Social Workers at Horizon  
15 and Crossroads to expand our transition teams and  
16 improve continuity of care.

17 Each student completes a personalized blueprint  
18 that serves as a roadmap for reentry, helping us  
19 identify strength, potential barriers, and the  
20 specific supports needed for life after detention.  
21 We are also deepening partnerships with Future Ready  
22 and Pathways to provide strategic resources such as  
23 financial literacy and certifications that require  
24 minimal brick and mortar class settings.  
25

In addition to transition planning, New York City public schools has also made significant strides in strengthening special education services at Passages. We hired an Administrator for Special Education Chedi(SP?), hi Chedi for secure detention centers to improve coordination across seven sites. Passages Academy expanded screening and intervention services using the WIAT-4 and STAR reading data. Special education teachers provide targeted support, including individualized reading Wilson System interventions two to three times per week.

And all special education students receive specially designed instruction through explicit teaching, a multi-tiered system of support, and collaborative planning among special education ELA, and math teachers. We are also proud to be launching SEED programming in collaboration with New York City Public Schools Special Education and DIAL office, which will allow services to take place at secure detention centers on Saturday's. We have completed orientation for prospective teachers and hired related service providers, as well as special education teachers to deliver reading intervention focused on vocational and career topics.

To further support academic achievement, we introduced Regents Saturday Test Prep Academy and began offering High School Equivalency pathways for eligible students in the evening in addition to the morning. We are also continuing our partnerships with OSYD, which is Office of Student and Youth Development, to provide professional development for detention center educators, including training in de-escalation techniques and specialized instruction for students with disabilities respectively.

Looking ahead, we are committed to fostering intentional collaboration with all stakeholders: our parents, staff, advocates, elected officials, and most importantly our students, to gain valuable insights and listen to suggestions for improvement. While progress has been made, data from the annual Local Law 21 Report underscores that there is still work to be done. This highlights the need to develop robust, comprehensive programming tailored to distinctive needs of this population. We use these findings on a consistent basis to guide and inform our next steps.

In closing, I want to thank you for all of you for your partnership and your unwavering support of

our students. Together we can ensure that education in detention is not a detour but a bridge to opportunity, dignity and hope for our students.

I will now turn it over to Chris Tricarico, Senior Executive Director of Office and Food and nutritious services to discuss the legislation.

CHRIS TRICARICO: Thank you. Good afternoon Chair Joseph, Chair Stevens and Council Members. My name is Chris Tricarico and I am the Senior Executive Director of the Office of Food and Nutrition Services. We appreciate the Council's leadership in introducing 987 and fully support the spirit of this bill to reduce surplus food in public schools. The proposed pilot program aligns with and compliments existing initiatives by the New York City Public Schools Office of Food and Nutrition Services to minimize food waste while ensuring students have access to nutritious meals. We distinguish between food waste, items taken but not consumed and surplus food, which are meals prepared but not served. When evaluated and deemed safe by the Office of Food and Nutrition Services staff, surplus can be reoffered, further reducing waste.

At OFNS, we proudly implement the USDA's Offer vs. Serve provision across all New York City Public Schools. This program is specifically designed to reduce food waste while maintaining nutritional standards. Under OVS, students are offered all of the required meal components, fruits, vegetables, grains, proteins and milk but may decline certain items. To qualify for reimbursement, students must select at least three components, which must include a fruit and/or vegetables. This flexibility empowers students to choose foods they are most likely to consume, significantly reducing waste. Salad bars and water are always available and they are not part of the above requirements.

Our efforts to reduce and minimize waste include student and family education to promote informed food choices, clear cafeteria signage and printed materials guiding meal selection, comprehensive staff training on accurate food order and batch cooking to prevent over prepping and surplus. Additionally, OFNS supports sustainability through shared tables and food donation programs to reduce excess waste. Taste tests and food education programs to increase student engagement, composting and diversion

1  
2 initiatives in a partnership with the Office of  
3 Energy and Sustainability.

4 Intro. 987's emphasis on educational materials  
5 aligns with these efforts and will strengthen our  
6 shared goals of reducing landfilled waste, lowering  
7 greenhouse gas emissions and fostering environmental  
8 responsibility. We look forward to collaborating on  
9 this pilot and leveraging our experience to ensure  
10 its success. Thank you for your continued  
11 partnership and I look forward to your questions.

12 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay, let's jump right into  
13 it. Uhm, in 2025, the State Comptroller audit found  
14 youth missing between 13 - uhm between 13 and 73  
15 percent of scheduled school days due to escort  
16 failures. What correction action plan has been  
17 implemented to ensure students are consistently  
18 escorted to class? And this is a question for ACS.  
19 Oh, I'm sorry, I would also like to acknowledge  
20 Council Member Narcisse and Council Member Lee who's  
21 also joined us.

22 NANCY GINSBURG: So, I would just like to note  
23 that the Comptroller's report covered a period of  
24 five years from 2018 through the end of 2023 and that  
25 included a period during which DOC was administering.

1  
2 Horizon and during for the year and a half of COVID.  
3 So, many of the issues that were highlighted during  
4 this period, this audit period, no longer exist. As  
5 I mentioned earlier, we have built internal teams to  
6 support the education of young people.

7 We now have uniformed uhm, staff. The Youth  
8 Development Specialists who are assigned in each  
9 facility who appear in the young peoples residential  
10 halls. They help the staff on the halls wake up  
11 young people, get them ready for school and bring  
12 them to the school classrooms. We have a non-uniform  
13 education team that works closely with the Passages  
14 staff and leadership to ensure that young peoples  
15 needs are being met and highlights issues that have  
16 come to the attention of facility staff to the school  
17 staff.

18 We also have developed a relationship with CUNY  
19 so that young people who are at the end of their GED  
20 or high school process can begin college classes and  
21 young people who have obtained their GED or graduated  
22 high school can engage in college education.

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Uhm, so a couple of things.  
24 One, we're definitely going to get to CUNY because  
25 when we were there, we spoke to students and they had

1  
2 some concerns around this partnership that is taking  
3 place but you said you have youth - so I know you  
4 said that the report between 2018 and 2023, and so  
5 things have been updated. So, are you saying today  
6 that like the youth development specialists is one of  
7 the things that you guys brought on to basically help  
8 improve the attendance. And so, are we saying - so  
9 what are the new numbers around ensuring that  
10 students are getting and being escorted to class  
11 every day? Do you have any uhm numbers around that  
12 to show the improvement and to talk about it other  
13 than uhm the kind of thing why you guys hired these  
14 folks? Because I know when myself and Chair Joseph  
15 visited, we did meet some of these development  
16 specialists but that doesn't necessarily guarantee  
17 that there was an improvement. So, do you have any  
18 quantified information to prove that? And as for the  
19 taking them - and so that's phrase yes.

20 NANCY GINSBURG: Well, we uhm, New York City  
21 Public Schools takes attendance, so we don't hold the  
22 attendance numbers. Uhm, we - I can say collectively  
23 we have -

24 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, even if DOE is taking  
25 the attendance, ACS is in charge of getting them

1  
2 there. And so, are you saying you're not tracking  
3 that?

4 NANCY GINSBURG: The number of young people who  
5 have been attending school has increased. If you  
6 want year by year from 2018, we're going to have to  
7 get back to you on that.

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay, well I'm a little  
9 disappointed that you wouldn't have the numbers  
10 because to say that there has been an increase and  
11 then not have the numbers and then say that DOE is  
12 the one taking the attendance. It's problematic  
13 because you're still in charge of tracking and taking  
14 them there and so I do look forward to making sure  
15 that we do get those numbers because I think that is  
16 important.

17 In 2023, ACS testified that the school liaison  
18 significantly improved engagement and attendance.  
19 Given the 2025 Comptroller's finding, how is the  
20 Administration measuring the effectiveness of these  
21 liaisons? So, you talked about the Chief Development  
22 Specialists and all the things and so, do you have  
23 like information on how that's being tracked and how  
24 that is actually improving the attendance?  
25

NANCY GINSBURG: Well, we've certainly seen a large increase in graduations and middle school promotions.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Do you have those numbers?

NANCY GINSBURG: We - yes. In 2022-2023, we had 30 young people graduate. In 20-

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I'm sorry, say that again.

NANCY GINSBURG: In 2022-2023, in the school year, we had 30 young people graduate. In 2023-2024 school year, there were 38 young people who graduated. In the 2024-2025 school year, there were 50 young people who graduated. And this school year that's in progress; we have had two middle school promotions and six pass their GED.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How many students were like so - let's say in 2025 when 50 students graduated, how many students were enrolled at that time?

NANCY GINSBURG: Well, enrollment is complicated in detention because the numbers are constantly changing. Young people come in to detention and they leave detention uhm based on their court case.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And so then how are then using these numbers to say that there has been an effective or there's been a change? Because even -

1  
2 because if you're saying that enrollment changes,  
3 people, that means young people are at different  
4 points and time so then how does this - how do these  
5 numbers then show that there actually has been an  
6 improvement?

7 NANCY GINSBURG: Well, 50 is more than 30.

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, well, I know 50 is more  
9 than 30 but you just said to me right now, you just  
10 said that enrollment changes and it looks different.  
11 So, you can have 50 because kids came in. Our young  
12 adults came in at a later point in their educational  
13 time, which means they graduated. So, I'm asking  
14 you, how are you using this information to justify  
15 that there is an improvement in the school liaison  
16 and saying that this is helping?

17 NANCY GINSBURG: The students' academic placement  
18 and where they - how they come in, is not data that  
19 ACS holds. That's New York City Public School.

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So again, how are you - how  
21 are you quantifying and looking at the effectiveness  
22 and saying that this is working?

23 NANCY GINSBURG: Well, we meet every week with  
24 the school, with school leadership and we plan out  
25 how to meet the needs of the current population at

1  
2 that time. And so, we are constantly in conversation  
3 about how to meet the needs of the young people who  
4 are in custody at that time. So, if there are  
5 issues, they are raised in real time so that they can  
6 be addressed.

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay, so I think we -  
8 because I feel for me it doesn't seem like there is  
9 any things putting in place to show that this is  
10 actually helping and obviously, I hope that you guys  
11 are meeting weekly and I know that there is a good  
12 relationship and synergy but I think specifically I  
13 was asking around the effectiveness of some of these  
14 things that have been put in but I'm going to go onto  
15 the next question. ACS responded to the State  
16 Comptroller audit, stating structural disruptions and  
17 historical staffing challenges as a context for  
18 missing school days. Can ACS clarify on what  
19 disruptions remains today and why escort failure  
20 continue despite multiple years of reform in hall  
21 based staffing implementing in 2024?

22 NANCY GINSBURG: So, as the Council is aware, we  
23 have more young people than we have bedroom capacity  
24 in the facilities. We have gone through an  
25 intentional process of ensuring that as many young

1  
2 people as can safely be accommodated are living and  
3 sleeping on the residential halls. This allows for  
4 young people to attend school and programming  
5 together. Safety is our most important priority in  
6 the facilities and there are young people who cannot  
7 safely be integrated on to a residential hall because  
8 of community conflict or conflict that has occurred  
9 within the facilities.

10 So, when - as we try to integrate young people  
11 into the residential halls, there are uhm - this  
12 summer, there was a large uptick in young people  
13 being admitted to the facilities. And at that point,  
14 it was very difficult to house those young people  
15 together because of their histories of community  
16 conflict prior to admission.

17 And more often than not, within the first few  
18 weeks of admission, young people - it was very  
19 difficult for us to integrate the new young people to  
20 the facility onto residential halls. And as a  
21 result, since we had to keep some of them separate  
22 from each other, we used the space that we had in  
23 these facilities.

24 Since this summer, we have done a tremendous  
25 amount of work to ensure that as many young people

1  
2 are living together on the residential halls, so that  
3 they can go to school and program together. And, as  
4 of last week, there were only 11 young people who  
5 were sleeping in classrooms and 7 of those 11 were of  
6 noncompulsory age.

7       So, although we had a larger number of young  
8 people who did not have bedrooms, they live and  
9 program and attend school with an assigned hall and  
10 so, for the most part, right now we have resolved  
11 most of this issue. It took a period of time during  
12 the fall to get to the place where we are now and we  
13 have each day; young people leave us and new young  
14 people come to us from the courts and that changes  
15 the dynamic in the facility. We have to be aware of  
16 that and ensure the young people are safe but we also  
17 have been having much more success in integrating  
18 young people so that they can live together.

19       CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, I mean listen, I  
20 understand like there's always going to be like these  
21 other dynamics and working with youth sometimes some  
22 just don't mix together and it doesn't make sense.  
23 And so, it is very difficult, which is why we do need  
24 to work on getting these numbers down, so this isn't  
25 an issue right. I think that is one of the things

1  
2 that I know I myself have been talking about and  
3 Council Member Joseph and even Council Member  
4 Williams. We've been talking a lot about like how do  
5 we create a decarceration plan because the issue is  
6 there's just too many young people there that should  
7 not be there. And so, uhm, obviously there's going  
8 to challenges but you know this is the hand we're  
9 dealt and so, how do we move forward to make sure  
10 that we're keeping everyone safe and they're still  
11 getting the opportunity to have access to education?

12 The next question I'm going to ask is, how many  
13 secure detention units currently operate school based  
14 housing areas and what percentage of youth in  
15 detention are currently placed in those units?

16 NANCY GINSBURG: So, school-based housing areas  
17 is a DOC designation. It's not an ECS designation.  
18 Every youth who is admitted to detention facilities  
19 administered by ACS is enrolled in school if they are  
20 eligible.

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How does ACS coordinate  
22 with DOE when school schedules suspension or  
23 emergencies affect attendance?

24 NANCY GINSBURG: We're in conversation every day  
25 with the school leadership, so we - the school

liaison's communicate with school leadership,  
facility leadership communicates, the Education  
Associates communicate. The communication is  
constant and daily.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, uhm this kind of goes  
back to the first question. The Comptroller audit  
found that ACS does not consistently document or  
report incidents where youth were not escorted to  
school. What internal control now exists to ensure  
that ACS is accurately tracking escort failures?

NANCY GINSBURG: The Education Associate Team  
maintains data.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, they're maintaining the  
data of like when young people are going to - being  
escorted to school or when they're not? So, you guys  
are tracking that?

NANCY GINSBURG: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: But why when I asked  
before, you said that you guys didn't, you weren't  
tracking that?

NANCY GINSBURG: We don't track attendance.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, but I didn't ask  
about attendance. I was asking about like the  
escorts. So, if you're tracking that, what are the

1  
2 numbers? Has it improved? Like, that was the first  
3 question I asked.

4 NANCY GINSBURG: So, we were not tracking it in  
5 2018.

6 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: No, I'm saying what is it  
7 now?

8 NANCY GINSBURG: Uhm, the overall in this school  
9 year, about 17 percent of the days students were not  
10 brought to school. Some students were not brought to  
11 school.

12 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, currently we're about 17  
13 percent of where young people who might not attend  
14 school.

15 NANCY GINSBURG: Not currently. Since September  
16 -

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Since September.

18 NANCY GINSBURG: That's the entire time.

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I know and it's November.

20 NANCY GINSBURG: Yeah.

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: In 2023, Gotham's  
22 investigations followed up in a 2025 reported  
23 classroom repurpose and sleeping quarters. How  
24 frequently have classrooms been used for housing  
25 since 2024? How many school days have been disrupted

1  
2 or canceled due to classrooms being used for sleeping  
3 quarters?

4 NANCY GINSBURG: So, I don't have that data. We  
5 don't - we have many students who as I was  
6 explaining, we had many students sleeping in  
7 classrooms over the summer and that number has gone  
8 down steadily since that time, until now, we have one  
9 classroom in each facility that is currently being  
10 used for that purpose.

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, now you have one and I  
12 just - and I want to go off record saying, this isn't  
13 a pop quiz, so it's not as if ACS didn't have these  
14 questions beforehand, so I just like to make sure we  
15 have that basis. Because to not have the data means  
16 that you just don't want to share because you had the  
17 questions, and to me that's not really acceptable.  
18 And so, if you're saying that it was happening in the  
19 summer, those numbers are important for us to know so  
20 that we can keep track to be able to monitor it.

21 And so, if you guys don't have the numbers and I  
22 know you have a team right there. You guys should be  
23 working on getting the numbers because we actually  
24 sent these questions before today's hearing. And  
25 it's important for us to have it because that's what

1  
2 we do as oversight. And so, I'll come back to this  
3 question because like that to me is just not okay.  
4 You just said that it was happening in the summer.  
5 It's not happening now, so what was the difference  
6 between then and now? And especially if you're  
7 saying that it's progress.

8 NANCY GINSBURG: So, the difference between then  
9 and now is that we have some young people have been  
10 released from the facility. We have been working  
11 very closely with the court system to ensure that  
12 young people who the courts believe can be released,  
13 are released. We -

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: But that's not the  
15 question. The question I'm asking is around the  
16 numbers and that's what is important. And so, I  
17 understand all the other factors and variables that  
18 go into that and that's not why I'm asking that  
19 question because I understand that but the numbers is  
20 what we need to see so that we can keep track to say  
21 like, oh this was happening right? If in the summer,  
22 there was three classrooms and that was the  
23 frequency. That's very different to now telling me  
24 anecdotes about something that like, I understand is  
25 an issue.

1  
2       So again, I really would like to know like what  
3 those numbers are. How many classrooms was being  
4 used? What's the difference now like in the numbers?  
5 So, according to October 8<sup>th</sup>, a letter published by  
6 the Legal Aid Society, nearly 100 youth in secure  
7 detention lack housing placements. How many youth in  
8 Horizon and Crossroads currently lack housing  
9 placements and how long do you typically remain  
10 without placements?

11       NANCY GINSBURG: On November 9<sup>th</sup>, which was the  
12 last date that we publicly - that we reported, there  
13 were 16 youth without a housing placement due to  
14 safety concerns, 11 of that 16 were in classrooms.  
15 It's very unusual for a young person to be in a  
16 classroom for an extended period of time because we  
17 are doing daily assessments about whether or they can  
18 be integrated onto our hall or if they can be  
19 transferred between the buildings so that we can  
20 identify a safe residential hall placement.

21       CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Because youth attending was  
22 their housing courter, how has the lack of stable  
23 housing affected the ability to consistently have  
24 educational instruction?  
25

1  
2 NANCY GINSBURG: So, if young people are sleeping  
3 at alternative - if young people are sleeping outside  
4 of a bedroom but they are on a residential hall.  
5 They attend school with that hall and almost all the  
6 young people who we have who are not sleeping in  
7 bedrooms are on residential halls and programming and  
8 attending school with that hall.

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, they would still -  
10 well, okay. Do youth attending school with the same  
11 cohort that they're housing with, even when their  
12 learning levels and education needs differ? If so,  
13 uhm, is this the most effective approach for grouping  
14 classes and delivering instruction?

15 NANCY GINSBURG: That's a New York City Public  
16 Schools question.

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Are you guys the ones that  
18 - is that DOE's policy to have do the sleeping, I  
19 mean with their halls or is that an ACS?

20 GLENDA ESPERANCE: No, we do not assign the hall.

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Right, so then that's an  
22 ACS question.

23 NANCY GINSBURG: We - the young people live on  
24 halls where they can be safe. Because safety is an  
25 extremely important issue in these settings, we

1  
2 assign housing according to where they will - the  
3 young people will be safe.

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, that's a no because we  
5 all know that it's not effective to have people at  
6 different levels to all be there with the guides of  
7 being safe. So, you know I think that like, it is  
8 okay to say no. I'm saying like we have to  
9 prioritize safety but we also need to be thinking  
10 about other things because that's not helpful  
11 sometimes if you have young people at all these  
12 different levels.

13 NANCY GINSBURG: One of the things that we have  
14 been able to work with Passages really effectively is  
15 to create a split schedule for the GED students. So,  
16 because there are GED students on almost every  
17 residential hall, the young people who are attending  
18 high school go in the morning for a full high school  
19 day and the GED program now runs in the afternoon  
20 from three to six.

21 And so, young people who are not attending high  
22 school will not travel with the high school students  
23 to those classrooms. It also allows us to  
24 accommodate different groups of young people at  
25 different times during the day, and that

1  
2 collaboration has been critically important in  
3 delivering education to as many students as possible.

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, I mean listen, it's  
5 really hard to have students who might be reading on  
6 the third grade level and another young person who  
7 has a tenth grade level to give them that attention  
8 that they need. And so, obviously this is again an  
9 issue that we do need to like evaluate right? Like,  
10 I think that yes, we want to make sure folks are  
11 safety is a priority but we also want to make sure  
12 that they are getting the things that they need. And  
13 that's really what this question is about of like,  
14 this is a place we need, so I kind of like look under  
15 the hood and say, "how can we change and address  
16 this?" Because this does become an issue. I  
17 believe.

18 NANCY GINSBURG: I don't mean to interrupt but  
19 one of the reasons why we doubled down on our  
20 commitment to tutoring is precisely for this reason.  
21 This is a dynamic that has existed in detention for  
22 as long as detention has been running as far as I  
23 know. At least in my 34 years.

24 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Just so you know, I'm not  
25 the right Council Member to say this is something

1  
2 that has always happened just because it always exist  
3 doesn't mean we should continue to do it.

4 NANCY GINSBURG: No, I agree with that.

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: That's never an answer for  
6 me.

7 NANCY GINSBURG: I agree with that. That is why  
8 we have committed to a large tutoring budget for both  
9 facilities so that young people can obtain additional  
10 academic support outside of the school setting. And  
11 so, young people obtain that tutoring sometimes on  
12 their halls, sometimes pushed into the classrooms  
13 before and after school.

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: No, I think tutoring is  
15 absolutely important and essential and when we were  
16 there, we did - some of the young people did talk  
17 about the additional tutoring services. That was  
18 very helpful but it's still not the same as  
19 instructional time and so, we all know that as well.

20 Legal Aid states that when one youth faces  
21 disciplinary action, the entire cohort loses access  
22 to classroom instruction for the day. Is this  
23 accurate and if so, how does ACS justify denied  
24 education to youth who are not involved in an  
25 incident?

1  
2 NANCY GINSBURG: That is not correct. There may  
3 be a time when there is an incident on a hall when we  
4 cannot safely move that hall to class but it is very  
5 unusual for that to happen and we make every effort  
6 that we can to allow young people who are not  
7 involved to attend school and programming.

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, that's not a regular  
9 practice but it might have happened a few times.

10 NANCY GINSBURG: No.

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Legal Aid reports that ACS  
12 is relying on the expansion of Horizon, which is  
13 currently more than four years away from completion.  
14 What interim alternatives for ACS to consider  
15 reducing overcrowding and restore education  
16 instruction now?

17 NANCY GINSBURG: We're working with DDC to build  
18 additional temporary housing at the Crossroads site,  
19 which is on a much quicker timeline, which should be  
20 an 18 month timeline. So, that will be quicker and  
21 we are working very closely with OCA and the youth  
22 parts to ensure that case processing is happening as  
23 quickly as possible.

24 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, I mean, listen I  
25 think we also need to be pushing back on the courts

1  
2 because even that's some of what I'm hearing as well  
3 that there's an extensive wait time for young people  
4 to be seen and of course so that's also adding to the  
5 over crowdedness and so, that is definitely something  
6 I know myself and colleagues are looking into and  
7 working with our state partners and colleagues  
8 because I think it was like on average or up to like  
9 100 days folks are waiting to be seen and that is  
10 unacceptable.

11 Does ACS track the number of instruction days  
12 disrupted by emergencies like lockdowns? If so, what  
13 were the total for Fiscal 2024 and Fiscal 2025?

14 NANCY GINSBURG: We don't track that but we  
15 almost never lock down a facility. So, ordinarily if  
16 there's an incident involving one hall, it will only  
17 affect that hall and the rest of the facility  
18 functions as regular.

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Both the Monitor's 6<sup>th</sup> and  
20 7<sup>th</sup> report indicates that classroom predictability  
21 improves safety and reduces assault. Given this, why  
22 has ACS not used the Monitor's framework to monitor  
23 educational access or disruptions?

24 NANCY GINSBURG: I'm sorry, I don't understand  
25 the question.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I'm assuming that this is in the Monitor's report, the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> report indicating that classroom predictability improves safety and reproduces assaults. Given this, why haven't you used like the Monitor's framework to help with some of the things that they said? So, basically saying like the monitor gave you guys uhm the report. Gave you guys I guess some things to implement and you guys didn't implement it.

NANCY GINSBURG: Education was not one of the factors that the Monitor was - had oversight of. And I apologize that I'm not clear to what you're referring.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay, I'll get back to you on that one. I have some questions around compliance but I know my colleagues, Council Member Williams will go into some more detail but how does ACS monitor and report its own performance metrics related to education, like escorting, completion rates, average time to school placements, missed school days due to ACS operations? Like, how do you guys monitor that?

NANCY GINSBURG: Our education associate team monitors that.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, they are the ones who are tracking all of that? How many people are on that team?

NANCY GINSBURG: Two to three.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: At each facility?

NANCY GINSBURG: At each facility.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Uhm, according to Local 21 Report, only 34 youth were enrolled in college class work in 2023 to 2024 while 87 percent were college age. What are the primary boundaries preventing enrollment?

NANCY GINSBURG: Well, not every student wants to enroll in college. That's why we also have vocational programming. So, we make - we discuss the options for students who have graduated but not every student is interested.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Uhm, my Council Member Dinowitz will have more questions around some of these CUNY questions but one of the things that when we were there that was mentioned from the young people was that yes, that there were options but they were taking the freshman intro - the freshman orientation over and over again and it was very limited.

1  
2       So, and I guess you can tell me now but also, I'm  
3 sure they'll go in detail but like what are we really  
4 offering young people when it comes to the college  
5 courses? I know we have the partnership with Hostos  
6 and - I know it's CUNY but I know Hostos is one of  
7 the schools but what are the things that - oh and  
8 BMCC.

9       NANCY GINSBURG: BMCC.

10       CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What are they being offered  
11 as far as like class? I know you said like  
12 anthropology but when we were there and we were  
13 talking to the young people, they were like, they're  
14 not being offered any of those things.

15       NANCY GINSBURG: Well, the classes that have been  
16 - we're only in our third semester of college, so we  
17 started fall of 2024, so fall of 2024, spring of 2025  
18 and now this semester.

19       CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah but when we were there  
20 - when did we go there? It was like in June right?  
21 It was like in June, literally the young man had said  
22 he had been there for a year and he took the freshman  
23 orientation twice and he said that he was not being  
24 offered anything else. And then it was like well, he  
25 won't be here for much longer and he'll be able to

1  
2 get classes once he leaves. So, like how are they  
3 getting access to this stuff and like, and I know  
4 like anthropology, some other stuff is that limited  
5 on like what facility they're in or what are the  
6 barriers for them not being offered more things?  
7 Especially when we have a situation where remote  
8 learning is a real thing.

9 NANCY GINSBURG: Hostos and BMCC offer different  
10 classes. So, there are different classes offered in  
11 each facility. Sometimes youth move back and forth  
12 between the facilities and young people, not all  
13 young people can attend class together. So, there  
14 might -

15 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Are these classes in  
16 person?

17 NANCY GINSBURG: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay.

19 NANCY GINSBURG: They are in person. The  
20 professors come -

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Is there a reason why we're  
22 not offering some remote options as well?

23 NANCY GINSBURG: The young people have asked for  
24 in person classes. They - we did originally start  
25 with a remote class and the young people indicated

1  
2 that they preferred in person instruction and so, we  
3 have been pursuing that.

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, I think that we  
5 should be at a place where they should have options  
6 because even when you're in school now, in college,  
7 classes are hybrid and there is both and I think that  
8 like if we have options to have more things offered,  
9 then that makes more sense. And so, I would love for  
10 us to start thinking about what are some remote  
11 options.

12 Uhm, so I'm going to go to Close the Homes. I  
13 have a couple more questions but I'll pass it off to  
14 Council Member Joseph and then we'll come back to me  
15 but how does ACS ensure that Close to Home Facilities  
16 provide safe, clean, and conducive space for  
17 studying and homework?

18 NANCY GINSBURG: So, the Close to Home sites are  
19 home like settings and so, there are living rooms.  
20 Each young - the young people have bedrooms with  
21 desks. There's community space where they can do  
22 homework and the both Belmont and Bronx Hope have  
23 plenty of space for young people to study and engage  
24 in homework.  
25

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Are there designated study areas, technology, access to like Wi-Fi and quiet hours for school work?

NANCY GINSBURG: In the houses?

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Hmm, hmm, in the Close to Home facilities.

NANCY GINSBURG: Yeah, as far as I know yes.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Is that part of like the requirement from like in the contract or is that just something that the providers create themselves?

NANCY GINSBURG: The providers are very committed to the young peoples education and have - are very engaged in supporting the young people in their academic pursuits and so, they are supportive.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: No but I know, I'm just asking is it part of the contract or is that for the providers to do? Because I don't - this isn't a question around whether they are committed or not. This is just asking because one of my things is always especially around contracting. It's reflective of our goals and so, sometimes I just want to make sure that we're putting them in to make sure that this is seen as a priority and not saying that the providers aren't doing it, I'm just asking when

1  
2 we were thinking about it because this was an RFP  
3 that came out a couple years ago. Was this something  
4 that we put in because that shows where our  
5 priorities are?

6 NANCY GINSBURG: It is our expectation that the  
7 providers will support education. I would have to  
8 get back to you at exactly what the language is in  
9 the contract.

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Hmm, hmm. How does ACS  
11 coordinate with DOT to ensure every youth in Close to  
12 Homes is promptly enrolled in appropriate programs  
13 upon placement?

14 NANCY GINSBURG: Uhm, once the young person is in  
15 placement, those names are provided to Passages and  
16 enrollment occurs.

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How long does that usually  
18 take on average?

19 NANCY GINSBURG: A day or two.

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How does ACS ensure uhm -  
21 what is the average number of days between a  
22 placement and you said a day or two. How does ACS  
23 measure success for Close to Home participants and  
24 are their metrics consistent across providers? So,  
25 how are you measuring like the success of like, the

1  
2 educational outcomes? Like do you guys have anything  
3 that like you're measuring to like see like, are you  
4 looking at attendance, academics, like graduation  
5 rates? Like what are you using to measure the  
6 success of those providers?

7 NANCY GINSBURG: Attendance is not really an  
8 option for Close to Home. They come - if they're  
9 compulsory school age, they are brought from their  
10 sites to the school and for limited secure, they have  
11 school onsite.

12 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Alright, I have a number of  
13 questions but I'll pass it off to Council Member  
14 Joseph and then I'll come back with some other  
15 questions. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you Chair Stevens.  
17 Advocates testify that instruction relied heavily on  
18 paper packets rather than live instruction by  
19 certified teachers. What portion of classes at  
20 Horizon and Crossroad currently rely on packet base  
21 work?

22 GLENDA ESPERANCE: We don't provide packets for  
23 instruction, in lieu of instruction.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: It's live instruction?

25 GLENDA ESPERANCE: It's live instruction.

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CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Because in the article that stated - that showed that the students were given packets.

GLENDASPERANCE: The packets that are given to the students aren't brought to the classes, so we don't want any type of interruption in instruction. So, our teachers create those packets and provide it to them, so that they can complete it in their halls and then their tutors support them with that.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay great. Thank you. So, how many vacancies do you currently exist for certified teachers in special education at each site?

GLENDASPERANCE: So, currently, just give me one second. Currently, there are four vacancies across Horizon and Crossroads, so we have three at Crossroads, which include one reading specialist and two special education teachers and at Horizon, one special education oh sorry, one reading specialist.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And how long are those vacancies remained unfilled?

GLENDASPERANCE: Uhm, some of these vacancies just came about because we've had people that retired but the goal is always to actively work with uhm

1  
2 teaching higher TRQ that we can find great talent to  
3 be onboarded and in those spaces.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, you're currently,  
5 actively recruiting right now?

6 GLENDA ESPERANCE: Always actively recruiting.  
7 Anybody here with a license, we're actively  
8 recruiting.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And that's a shortage area  
10 in special education.

11 GLENDA ESPERANCE: Absolutely.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Is there any incentive to  
13 bring in teachers with those special licensing or  
14 encourage colleagues to maybe change their licensing  
15 and come into special education?

16 GLENDA ESPERANCE: We've done a combination of  
17 both. So, for the teachers who have demonstrated  
18 interest of probably wanting to go and get another  
19 certification, we definitely encourage and have those  
20 conversations. We also have targeted fairs, so  
21 people can learn more about our district and learn  
22 about what we offer and then uhm, we also - like I  
23 said been in conversation with HRTQ. We have  
24 connected with colleges so that we can get students  
25 coming right out of college to support our needs and

1  
2 so, that's been the work, and then one of the  
3 greatest incentives that we provide is that you  
4 change a life the minute you walk into that setting  
5 and support students on a day to day basis.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: There's also students with  
7 special needs are not receiving their legally  
8 mandated services. How are you helping with that?

9 GLENDA ESPERANCE: So, once students are  
10 onboarded into Passages, what we do is we provide a  
11 special education plan. We're proud to report that  
12 over the past three years, we have been intentional,  
13 ensuring that the students complete 100 percent.  
14 That our teachers complete 100 percent of the plans.  
15 We have 88 percent that are done within the first 30  
16 days and there's 13, maybe 13 or 17 percent that take  
17 a little bit longer but that happens because we want  
18 our parents to be a part of it. So, that delay of  
19 more than 30 days, that's why it's there.

20 In addition to that what we've done and been  
21 intentional with, is that we hired a special  
22 education administrator solely for passages. The  
23 role of that person is to review all the IEP  
24 mandates, work with programming to ensure that  
25 they're happening, and if there's a need for related

1  
2 services by way of RSA, she's always engaging with  
3 that department. In addition, what we've done  
4 through the partnership of DIAL that we're very proud  
5 of that we'll be launching officially in December but  
6 we've already started the orientation process, is  
7 that we are offering the SEED program that's offered  
8 citywide. We are creating those spaces in the  
9 detention centers, so on Saturdays, students will be  
10 able to have an opportunity to do service recovery in  
11 speech, counseling, OT1 necessary as well as PT, as  
12 well as providing special education resources around  
13 reading recoveries as well. And that reading piece  
14 will be offered not only to students with IEPs but  
15 also to any student that presents the reading delay.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Are you currently doing  
17 dyslexia screening as well?

18 GLENDA ESPERANCE: Absolutely, I knew you was  
19 going to ask that question.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Of course.

21 GLENDA ESPERANCE: Because you always do. So, we  
22 started it two years ago. We're proud to report not  
23 only that we not only - we don't call it a pilot  
24 anymore.

25 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Right.

1  
2       GLEND A ESPERANCE: It is the work that we do and  
3 that's expanded across all of our sites, all seven  
4 sites. The teachers are trained. We are  
5 administering the Wyatt screener as well as using our  
6 STARS in house screener to identify the students and  
7 provide them with strategic research based  
8 intervention.

9       In addition to that, we - like I said, we have  
10 really been intention of looking at the curriculum  
11 you use and just hearing from the students, that's  
12 one of the things that we want to do. Some of the  
13 students said like some of the texts that you're  
14 giving us is boring. Miss, what can you do?

15       And so, what we've done and been intentional  
16 about is implementing Black studies curriculum  
17 because as many people see when they look at the  
18 data, the majority of our students are Black and  
19 Brown children and so, what we did, it's not only  
20 about academic recovery but also identity recovery.  
21 Letting them see greatness so that they can emulate  
22 it and from the feedback that we've gotten from the  
23 students, they've been really excited about that  
24 work.  
25

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And how are families engaged in this conversation? For example, you talked about earlier about uhm, reevaluation of IEP services. How are families engaged in that conversation?

GLEND A ESPERANCE: So, just to clarify, so what we do is the special education plan. And so, every student that comes in, there's a conversation that happens with their families around the special education program that they have on their IEP.

And so, with the plan, what we talk about, we do an assessment of the performance of the students, talk about supports that can be given. Not only to the students but we also have found and been really excited about, how do we make our parents, some of our parents have revealed their own that see challenges. So, we are also helping them with like adult education classes that we refer them to outside in the community, as well as uhm just parents as partners so that they can share in that work as well. But we are intentional on having ongoing conversations with our parents throughout the time that our students are in the Passages Academy.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Is there an in house SBSD team that does this evaluation? How is it done for young people?

GLENDASPERANCE: Okay, so the way the evaluation process happens is that it is referred out. So, our students through the reevaluation process and then we do the SBSD. There are some that are done on uhm, like I said the SBSD and the reeval, it's done but it's not done in house. It's done out externally.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: It's done externally?

GLENDASPERANCE: Externally, yeah.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, what steps have New York City Public Schools taken to repair, replace broken classroom technology reported in 2023 such as non-functional smart boards?

GLENDASPERANCE: So, what we do is we've definitely been intentional about uhm, improving the facilities with regards to smart boards and so forth. Sometimes there are smart boards that are out of function because they were just damaged over time but that has been our intention to make sure that we upgrade the technology, as well as providing curriculum.

1  
2       So, we've invested in purchasing new books, more  
3 interest rate books so that we can replenish our  
4 libraries. So that is something that we are  
5 committed to and continue to be committed to on an  
6 ongoing basis.

7       CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And when was the last time  
8 the technology was upgraded at these facilities?

9       GLENDA ESPERANCE: I want to say we do a little  
10 bit each year, so -

11       CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And what was done this year?

12       GLENDA ESPERANCE: I will ask the Principal.  
13 Yeah, do you mind?

14       CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Sir, please come to the -

15       GLENDA ESPERANCE: Oh, you got to come to the  
16 front, sorry.

17       CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

18       SHAREEF RASHID: Uh afternoon. We have uh  
19 promethean boards that are in our classrooms. Out of  
20 ten classrooms, we have nine promethean boards. We  
21 currently have one that's out of service and we are  
22 looking to replenish that one. But all of our  
23 classrooms minus that one have promethean boards.

24       CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And the computers?  
25

1  
2 SHAREEF RASHID: Yes, we have uhm Chromebooks, so  
3 we have over 70 Chromebooks that students have access  
4 to and utilize in the classroom. That is a teachers  
5 tool, so they use it based on what the curriculum  
6 needs, as well as some of our teachers and students  
7 may need different courses. So, they use the  
8 Chromebooks for the Edmentum and Apex program.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And all of the Chromebooks  
10 are currently working? None is outdated, none is  
11 broken, they're all working, all 70 of them.

12 GLENDA ESPERANCE: So, do you mind if I just jump  
13 in on that?

14 SHAREEF RASHID: Yeah.

15 GLENDA ESPERANCE: So, we actually have somebody  
16 that that's their job is to definitely look at the  
17 technology and make sure that it stays current and if  
18 there's something wrong with it that they let us know  
19 so that we can expedite and triage that.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Advocates for children found  
21 that over half of the youth at Passages entered  
22 reading below the five percentile. I know you talked  
23 about reading intervention tutoring. How do you help  
24 those students up with the skills when they first  
25

1  
2 come in? Is there an assessment taking? Is there -  
3 what are we doing with them?

4 GLENDA ESPERANCE: So, we do a formal assessment  
5 through STAR but because the average stay of our  
6 students is probably 38 days for any of our students.  
7 In addition to doing the STAR formal assessment, we  
8 also do in class assessments, which consists of  
9 teacher observations, informal assessments and I'm  
10 sorry, classroom level assessment, as well as  
11 conversations in the review of the IEP with the level  
12 of performance.

13 Once we gauge an idea of where these students are  
14 performing at, we - that's one of the things that our  
15 teachers have really invested in in creating an SDI  
16 and we train them in a variety of different  
17 practices, so we're also doing MTSS. Just to ensure  
18 that we understand that we have a wide range of  
19 learners in front of us so that we can scaffold and  
20 provide instruction accordingly.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Do you look back at their  
22 homeschools and see what they were doing?

23 GLENDA ESPERANCE: Absolutely that's one of the  
24 things that we do from the very beginning.

25 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Just checking.

1  
2       GLEENDA ESPERANCE: Yeah, we do - we definitely  
3 review their transcripts and really - and call out to  
4 their homeschools to find out because I think that's  
5 the best source as well. And then we also speak to  
6 the students. Students are very transparent of what  
7 they can and cannot do and when we do the blueprint  
8 with them, they let us know what their strengths are  
9 and what are some things that they would want  
10 supported. So, we do a combination of.

11       CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And how do you measure  
12 growth for students who are enrolled only for a short  
13 time and when is that growth data published? Where  
14 does that data live?

15       GLEENDA ESPERANCE: So, we have two pieces. So,  
16 we have our own internal where we look at different  
17 milestones, like promotion, credit recovery, I'm  
18 sorry credit accumulation, Regents and not only do we  
19 look at it as a whole, we look at it as subgroups and  
20 then uhm, we also look at the pass rate as well as  
21 uhm I'm sorry - we look at the pass rate as well.

22       Where it lives, we have our own internal  
23 monitoring that we do. Yeah, we have our own  
24 internal monitoring that we do.  
25

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I'd like to recognize  
Council Member Shekar, Sanchez and Gutiérrez.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh uhm, well, we had  
Council Member Dinowitz a minute but they've already  
left, so we'll go to Council Member Williams for her  
questions.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you. I'm going  
to ask questions from Council Member Narcisse first.  
She had to go but she wanted to say hello to Glenda.  
She wanted to make sure we said hello to you. Her  
friend, she appreciates all the work that you do and  
the question that I have is, does ACS track whether  
youth who miss school while in custody and therefore  
reoffend at higher rates? If not, why is that data  
not being monitored?

NANCY GINSBURG: We do not track that. Uhm, that  
would be very difficult. We don't have access to  
that information. The re-offense rates, many of the  
young people are over 18 when they leave us. They  
don't come back to us. We don't have access to that  
information.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, and her other  
question was has ACS conducted any internal  
performance reviews or disciplinary actions related

1  
2 to escort failures in the past two years? If yes,  
3 how many staff were disciplined?

4 NANCY GINSBURG: We don't have the same escort  
5 issues as there are in the adult system. We haven't  
6 seen a need for discipline because our education -  
7 the YDS who are serving those roles are every day  
8 trying to get young people to school. The challenge  
9 that we're having right now is census and  
10 availability of classrooms. It's not because of  
11 staff failure.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you, okay. Now I  
13 have a few questions specifically around compliance.  
14 In 2023, the Administration testified that all youth  
15 of compulsory school age are required to go to  
16 school. How is compliance enforced when youth are  
17 not escorted or classes are canceled?

18 NANCY GINSBURG: So, we had many fewer young  
19 people in 2023. Our census was not at the current  
20 state that it is. So, every day we are doing  
21 everything that we can. Our staff is encouraging  
22 every young person to go to school as long as we have  
23 space to bring them to school.

24 Currently, as in this week, every classroom but  
25 one in each facility is available for classes and so,

1  
2 every young person who is eligible for school and is  
3 compulsory school age, is being brought to school  
4 unless they refuse and even when they refuse,  
5 additional efforts are made by staff to encourage  
6 them to attend. Sometimes we will communicate with  
7 their counsel or their parent to help encourage the  
8 young person to attend. Often the young people who  
9 struggle the most are students who have struggled  
10 with attendance prior to their admission with us and  
11 it takes some time to get them in a place where they  
12 are attending every day.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I know the Chair  
14 earlier had a whole slew of questions around or  
15 comments around the lack of data but you said  
16 something. You said there were 11 students that were  
17 not in school. What was this? This is from last  
18 week. When was that and then like 7-

19 NANCY GINSBURG: There were 11 students who were  
20 sleeping in classrooms.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Oh sleeping, okay. So  
22 do you have the data of - because I know the data  
23 that we've been provided, which I think how they  
24 quantified it is interesting but I mean, it's  
25 alarming to see that nearly half of the students are

1  
2 not actually attending class regularly. So, do you  
3 have current data right now? Like, last week, are  
4 you able to share out of all the students who are of  
5 compulsory school age, how many actually went to  
6 class and how many did not go to class?

7 NANCY GINSBURG: Well, attendance is much higher  
8 than 50 percent.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay.

10 NANCY GINSBURG: Uhm, do you have the attendance  
11 numbers?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: See I think we hear  
13 things from workers. Like, I've heard a ton of  
14 complaints from workers in the facility around this  
15 specific issue when the students don't want to go to  
16 school. This idea of like, whether or not they're  
17 truly compelled to go to school and the  
18 accountability around that. It seems to me a little  
19 grey and a lot of the data that I believe the Chair  
20 was requesting at least helps us to understand what's  
21 real and what's not real.

22 Because it's hard. It's like all anecdotal  
23 information with no clear numbers around school  
24 attendance.

1  
2 Okay, perhaps we can get it by the end of the  
3 hearing. The next question I have is ACS's response  
4 to the State Comptroller's Audit relies heavily on  
5 improved safety indicators. How does ACS reconcile  
6 safety improvements with the continuing failures and  
7 educational access? I did find in the audit and in  
8 DOE's own Local Law 21 reporting.

9 NANCY GINSBURG: So, safety is a minimum  
10 requirement before we can get to programming our  
11 school. The Nunez Monitor noted that the rates of  
12 youth on youth assaults were reduced, declined by 34  
13 percent from the time they started monitoring to the  
14 current time.

15 Rates of youth on staff assault had declined by  
16 58 percent. So, the safer the building is, the  
17 easier it is to move young people to their classes  
18 and to programming.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Yeah, I think the  
20 question though is like how did you do that? So, how  
21 do you reconcile that? How do you balance safety and  
22 attendance, and how do you reconcile all of that?  
23 Because it, I mean by way of this question, by way of  
24 the reports and the data, one would make an  
25 assumption that safety has become a part of a

1  
2 variable that gets taken into consideration and/or  
3 impacts educational access within the facilities  
4 according to the audit in DOE's Local Law 21  
5 reporting, so how are you actually reconciling that?

6 NANCY GINSBURG: So, as the buildings have gotten  
7 safer, we have been able to produce more young people  
8 to school. There are two -

9 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: How have you made the  
10 building safer?

11 NANCY GINSBURG: Well, there's been a number of  
12 steps that we have taken. We have improved and  
13 expanded the frequency in the number of searches that  
14 are done on the halls of the young people. We have  
15 seen a very significant drop in contraband in the  
16 facilities. Uhm, we have implemented a robust  
17 behavior system where young people are able to  
18 respond to issues that they might have or conflict  
19 that they might have in a restorative manner.

20 We have implemented a type of commissary system  
21 so that at different levels, young people can earn  
22 different items. They get better snacks when they  
23 are - uhm when their behavior is better. They get  
24 better personal toiletry items and certain privileges  
25 like movie nights and activities that motivate the

1  
2 young people to behave. We have rolled out a CBT  
3 program called Power Source where young people are  
4 working with their staff and facility leadership in  
5 exploring past traumas, and triggers that effect  
6 their behavior and ways to manage those issues, so  
7 that they don't have as many outward behavioral  
8 issues and they can talk through their conflicts.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you. No, that  
10 was really helpful and helpful to know because like  
11 we don't work in the facilities and so, you know we  
12 want to understand how do you reconcile this.

13 Okay, I have two more questions. The other  
14 question is, would ACS commit to sharing monthly  
15 indicators that link ACS operations, escort failures,  
16 staff, absenteeism, lock ins to school attendance and  
17 instructional hours rather than relying on DOE only  
18 reporting. So, would ACS commit to also providing  
19 data that supports all of the things.

20 NANCY GINSBURG: We can certainly explore that.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, and then do you  
22 have the other answer for attendance?

23 GLENDA ESPERANCE: I'm still looking for it.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay. The last  
25 question that I have and this is just based off of

1  
2 knowing people who have worked in the facility. Uhm,  
3 that there seems to be some sometimes discrepancies  
4 between the agencies who are operating in the  
5 facility that cause certain operational hiccups and  
6 so, I just wanted to understand in the facilities  
7 themselves, how do the agencies interact? I'm trying  
8 to - I wish I should have called her before this  
9 hearing but she was explaining some very weird thing  
10 about how the teachers are like locked in the rooms  
11 and then like one of the workers from ACS has to do  
12 something and it just seemed like some operational  
13 challenges between ACS and the individuals who are  
14 coming into the building to provide instruction to  
15 the students from DOE. So, if you could just share a  
16 little bit about how both agencies interact to  
17 support the students and to minimize any operational  
18 hiccups.

19 NANCY GINSBURG: One of the reasons why we have  
20 weekly meetings is to identify issues that are  
21 happening in real time. Uhm, and one of the big  
22 reasons why we have so much - so many ACS staff  
23 dedicated to supporting the school program is so that  
24 we can have both uniformed and nonuniformed staff  
25 throughout the building, ensuring that classes are

1  
2 happening the way they are supposed to and that  
3 teachers are allowed the movement that they need to  
4 teach and to get from place to place. I think that  
5 this was more of an issue that we were having in the  
6 past. I'm not going to say there's never an issue  
7 where a teacher can't get to where they want to go to  
8 at the very moment that they want to go but the  
9 communication has gotten much better and we have  
10 uniformed staff that are working in the corridors  
11 where the classrooms are and our uniformed staff is  
12 present on the school floor. So, that if a teacher  
13 needs something they have access to ACS staff almost  
14 all of the time to ensure that there are fewer of  
15 those incidents.

16 GLENDA ESPERANCE: I just also wanted to just  
17 share the attendance rate for Crossroads and Horizon.  
18 The average total is 80 percent.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: And then the 20  
20 percent, do we know what's going on?

21 GLENDA ESPERANCE: So, the 20 percent is coded as  
22 a release code and when we code a release code, that  
23 means that the students aren't coming to school  
24 because of a host agency uhm concern or matter.  
25

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: So, what could that be,  
ACS right? That would be ACS or what would that be?

GLEND A ESPERANCE: The code attendance is coded  
separately.

NANCY GINSBURG: Okay so there are a number of  
reasons why young people might go to school that we  
are sending anywhere between 10 and 40 young people  
to court every day. They might have counsel visits;  
they have evaluations for court. They might be sick,  
so-

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Does that get  
communicated though?

GLEND A ESPERANCE: I was going to clarify. So,  
what will happen is if they are sick like we have  
specific apps and codes if somebody is sick, if  
somebody is going to court.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, they get details.

GLEND A ESPERANCE: So, let me give a little bit -  
I'll give more context, so for the release code of  
Code 90, if it's like, what do you call it? Like if  
it's a whole site facilities issue. So, let's say  
forget for example, if it's flooding or uhm if  
there's a situation that a classroom isn't available  
or if students aren't brought. Like that's what the

1  
2 code, release code 90 is. But once again, we do  
3 connect. I think that was the question that you  
4 asked. So, we connect with ACS in the morning. We  
5 do connect with ACS in the morning so that we can  
6 engage what's happening in the facility. We do that  
7 every morning.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, uhm, yeah I think  
9 - when I learned about this because I learned about  
10 this from again people that worked there. I just I  
11 think it's a little crazy that there isn't 100  
12 percent attendance when it can be and I know there  
13 are different things that do happen of course if they  
14 have a court case or they need to prep or something  
15 like that, then I understand why they can't be in  
16 school and I guess you can't physically drag them  
17 into the classroom but uhm it's right there. They  
18 don't have to like travel to go to school, so I just  
19 - I think the numbers require all of us to like think  
20 about how we can improve that, especially when some  
21 of the hurdles are operational and not even the  
22 students fault. I think that's just like absolutely  
23 unacceptable but thank you so much for your answers.

24 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I just had a question to  
25 follow up. I know Council Member Williams, she was

1  
2 just asking about the correlation between keeping  
3 track of folks with the recidivism and things like  
4 that and you said that you guys don't keep track of  
5 that. But does ACS have transitional specialists at  
6 the facilities, at all of the secure detention  
7 centers?

8 NANCY GINSBURG: For school?

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah - no just transitional  
10 specialists.

11 NANCY GINSBURG: We - we have case managers who  
12 sometimes work on transition.

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, you guys don't have  
14 transition specialists who help students plan for  
15 their transition and provide support following their  
16 release for up to six months?

17 NANCY GINSBURG: That's a DOE function.

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: That's a DOE function. So,  
19 you guys have transitional specialists?

20 GLENDA ESPERANCE: So, as I shared in the opening  
21 testimony, so we do have uh - we also were  
22 intentional to hire an administrator who supervises  
23 transition. And then we are also building out that  
24 team. So, we've hired two additional social workers  
25 for Horizon and two additional social workers for

1  
2 Crossroads, so that we can emphasize and really dig  
3 in deep with regards to that piece.

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And so, you're transition  
5 is more around like the educational piece?

6 GLENDA ESPERANCE: It's looping them back, yeah.  
7 The transition is looping them into the - getting  
8 them back into that educational piece.

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, ACS doesn't have  
10 something equivalent on the other side to help with  
11 transition that follows up and to make sure they're  
12 doing their services and supports?

13 NANCY GINSBURG: So, our young people, when they  
14 are released for the most part have open court cases  
15 and are represented by Council and their Council are  
16 doing that planning for them with the court. So, it  
17 depends on what the court might order or what is  
18 required as a condition of release.

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: That's interesting. I  
20 would have thought that like ACS would have had an  
21 equivalent to a transition specialist to kind of like  
22 help with those adjustments in the same way like  
23 they're trying to help with educational adjustments  
24 of like saying okay, you're being released. You  
25 might still have court but how are we going to

1  
2 continue the longevity of like making sure that like  
3 whether you're going to your court cases, given  
4 parent supports, like and trying to holistically uhm  
5 support the young person. But okay, you said you had  
6 case managers though.

7 NANCY GINSBURG: We have case managers and we've  
8 just hired - we've just onboarded an assistant  
9 commissioner for transition. And so, we are looking  
10 to build out -

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Is that a new role or?

12 NANCY GINSBURG: It's a new role.

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh, and what is that as the  
14 transition? What would that job description entitle?

15 NANCY GINSBURG: That person is going to support  
16 the continuum. So, NSD, Close to Home, and Secure  
17 for young people who are going back into the  
18 community to support our provider agencies in the  
19 transition out of Close to Home and NSD and for the  
20 young people where it's appropriate leaving secure  
21 detention.

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay, so you guys have seen  
23 that transition there. There is a need to have some  
24 follow up and connections with the young people after  
25 they leave out of a facility. Okay, well I wish you

1  
2 would have just started there because I think that  
3 that would have just you know, I think it is  
4 important. Like the follow up is necessary as well.

5       Okay great. Uhm, I'm going to go back to some of  
6 the questions around uhm like the uhm, making sure  
7 that young people have opportunities to have pathways  
8 to whether it's vocational. What supports are  
9 provided to students that complete high school who  
10 automatically offered pathways to college or  
11 vocational? So, what does that look like a young  
12 person - how do we encourage them? Because at that  
13 point, they're not school age so you can't force them  
14 but what is the encouragement to get young people to  
15 either want to go to college or have vocational  
16 trainings?

17       NANCY GINSBURG: So, once a young person - some  
18 of our young people start college classes while  
19 they're still finishing their high school or GED  
20 course of study and those referrals are usually made  
21 in collaboration with our partners at Passages for  
22 young people who indicate an interest in starting  
23 that earlier or demonstrate a particular aptitude  
24 where the Passages leadership believe that they would  
25 be well suited for a college class.

1  
2 And so, we coordinate with Passages to identify  
3 those students. Young people, once they graduate,  
4 there are conversations that happen about what the  
5 young people might be interested in after their  
6 graduation. And so, as some young people indicate  
7 that they want to go to college, we have some young  
8 people who have said that they did not want to go to  
9 college and then change their minds. And so, the  
10 options are always being presented to the young  
11 people, even if they initially decline. They are  
12 aware that they can change their mind and ask to  
13 enroll. Of course, you know it's a college  
14 enrollment schedule, so you can't start in the middle  
15 of the semester.

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: But what encouragements are  
17 given to young people, right? Like I think that like  
18 yes, it's great that it's there to be offered.  
19 Although, like I said, from some of the conversations  
20 we had with the young people, it didn't - uhm they  
21 didn't feel like it was as fruitful as they would  
22 have hoped but how do we encourage them right? Like,  
23 we have young people who obviously have had some  
24 trauma and some challenges in their lives and now  
25 might not see that this is even a real option. What

1  
2 encouragements are we trying to get them to motivate  
3 them to even get to a place to even see college as an  
4 option?

5 NANCY GINSBURG: So, we've seen one of the best  
6 motivators is seeing their peers attending college  
7 and coming back to the hall and talking about that  
8 experience and often young people are motivated by  
9 their peers and they - we've seen many young people  
10 decide to request college access because of  
11 conversations that they've had with their peers. Our  
12 staff is constantly talking to the young people about  
13 opportunities that open to them because they are in  
14 college.

15 One of the great things about our relationship  
16 with Hostos and BMCC is if they are enrolled while  
17 they're in the facility and they are released; they  
18 can walk out of our building and go to the college  
19 location and continue classes there.

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Well, that leads to my next  
21 question. How are college credits earned through  
22 CUNY partnership recorded and transferred at release?  
23 Like how do we keep track of that and how do we  
24 ensure that they are able to use those credits?

1  
2 NANCY GINSBURG: So, we have an Assistant  
3 Commissioner and that is her - one of her primary  
4 roles is the coordination with the CUNY schools. And  
5 she collects those - she tracks those credits and is  
6 in constant conversation with the CUNY leadership.  
7 So that young people who are released, uhm can pursue  
8 enrollment once they're in the community and she also  
9 has those conversations with OCFS for the young  
10 people who are sentenced so that they can pursue  
11 ongoing college once they're starting their sentence.  
12 She has been able to work with CUNY professors when  
13 young people are sentenced in the middle of a college  
14 class, so that the young people can complete that  
15 class and obtain those credits remotely while they're  
16 serving their sentence and then they switch over to  
17 the SUNY program or the Community College program  
18 that the upstate facilities are associated with.

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Has ACS evaluated the  
20 outcomes of college level participation such as post  
21 release participation and credit transfer or  
22 employment?

23 NANCY GINSBURG: Because we're at the very  
24 beginning of the process, we have not evaluated it  
25

1  
2 but we are in conversations with CUNY about doing  
3 that.

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, I just want to say  
5 uhm, definitely even though we're in the beginning, I  
6 think we should start how we want to finish and so,  
7 we should start making sure that that is an active  
8 practice because you know I think that even when  
9 we're talking about even having peer to peer  
10 conversations, I think it's important for us to also  
11 let them know like, young people who started these  
12 college courses, this is what's happened and I think  
13 that that also could help with some of that as well.

14 ACS has testified that it offers vocational  
15 training in real estate, construction, engineering  
16 and more. How many youth participated in each  
17 program last year and how many completed  
18 certification?

19 NANCY GINSBURG: We've had 406 completions and  
20 291 certifications. We've had 17 programs and 24  
21 young people participated in each program.

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And I know when we went to  
23 visit you guys, you were saying that you were looking  
24 to get some new things to offer young people. Have  
25 you guys finalized that list? I know that there was

1  
2 some RFP's out around some of the stuff that the  
3 young people wanted to see brought in. Has that been  
4 finalized?

5 NANCY GINSBURG: So, our partners, Children's  
6 Village and Bard Prison Initiative, they contract for  
7 those services and we have seen a number of new  
8 programs come on over the last year and a half. The  
9 most popular are flagging and OSHA. Electrical has  
10 been very popular, scaffolding, barbering, spackling,  
11 taping and painting is a very popular class.

12 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Uhm, how does ACS determine  
13 whether a youth is placed in vocational track or  
14 college level programs? Is that just voluntary from  
15 the young people?

16 NANCY GINSBURG: Yeah, you can do both. A young  
17 person can do both if they indicate inclinations, uhm  
18 choose one or the other.

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Uhm, Council Member Sanchez  
20 has a question. I'll pass it to her.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you. Thank you  
22 Chairs and thank you for organizing this hearing on  
23 this important topic. I just had a follow up  
24 question on something that was mentioned earlier in  
25 connection with overcrowding at our facilities at

1  
2 Horizon and Crossroads. We hear you enumerating the  
3 challenges relating to having older students in  
4 detention and earlier I believe that you mentioned,  
5 ACS mentioned and identified that there are youth  
6 sleeping in classrooms and in the common areas. So,  
7 can you tell us more about these conditions? Can you  
8 describe what are they sleeping on? What is  
9 oversight looking like? And if residents are  
10 sleeping in classrooms, doesn't that lead to some of  
11 the you know it's kind of circular, isn't that  
12 leading to some of the challenges that you're talking  
13 about with being unable to engage the students in  
14 some of the goals that you've mentioned today? Thank  
15 you.

16 NANCY GINSBURG: Well, it's certainly our  
17 preference that we have as few young people in  
18 custody as possible. As you are aware, we don't have  
19 control of that number and part of the work that  
20 we're doing every day is ensuring that the young  
21 people who can be safely integrated onto residential  
22 halls are integrated into those halls.

23 So, each facility has ten halls and each of those  
24 halls has a number of bedrooms anywhere from let's  
25 say 8 to 16. If when we go over that number of

1  
2 whatever that number is, we have young people  
3 sleeping in what we refer to as boats. Their formal  
4 name is a barker bunk. They are plastic like cots  
5 that hold a mattress and bedding and young people  
6 receive a full set of bedding and sleep in those.

7 Originally when this first started a year and a  
8 half ago, uhm we had - the young people were sleeping  
9 in classrooms off of the halls, not in the common  
10 areas of the halls.

11 The young people asked if they could sleep on the  
12 halls because they wanted to be near the other young  
13 people with whom they were programming with. It  
14 allowed them access to study staff with whom they had  
15 relationships with and it just improved their every  
16 day experience. And so, because we're always talking  
17 to our young people, even though this is not an ideal  
18 situation, we're every day trying to determine how we  
19 can do the best that we can given the circumstances.

20 So, the young people who are sleeping on the  
21 halls in those common areas, take showers on the  
22 halls, they eat with the other young people and they  
23 program and go to school with those young people.

24 Uhm, when the number really kicked up over the  
25 summer and because of the level of conflict in the

1  
2 communities that the young people were coming into  
3 the facilities with, we had to separate many of them  
4 from each other and they were not in a position.  
5 Many of the young people come in and they asked not  
6 to be placed on halls because they have concerns  
7 about their safety because of prior relationships  
8 with other young people we have in custody from the  
9 community.

10 And so, sometimes it just takes a matter of time  
11 for them to get used to the environment and not that  
12 anyone gets used to this environment but they get a  
13 little bit more comfortable. They start seeing that  
14 there are staff who care about them, who are  
15 interested in their wellbeing and through a number of  
16 conversations and introductions to different groups  
17 of young people. We can usually find a hall  
18 placement for most young people, which is why last  
19 week, we were only - we were down to only 11 young  
20 people between the facilities who were left in  
21 classrooms and who were there for safety reasons  
22 because we could not safely have them on a  
23 residential hall.

24 So, it's obviously not ideal. We don't think  
25 it's ideal either and that's part of why we have been

1  
2 in consistent conversations with the courts, with the  
3 youth part judges to ensure that cases are being  
4 adjourned in you know in a timely way. That young  
5 people - we're speaking to young peoples counsel to  
6 ensure that counsel is in contact with the young  
7 people. So, that the pace of the case is happening.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Right, just because I'm  
9 out of time. Uhm, I guess I just want to understand  
10 in the context of you not being able to control the  
11 numbers that are coming to you. Uhm, have you had  
12 conversations with the Mayor's Office, elsewhere?  
13 And I would never be the one that's advocating for  
14 more beds to lock up our youth but uhm to make sure  
15 that they're living in humane conditions. Have there  
16 been conversations with the Mayor's Office with your  
17 vertical? And thank you Chairs for the time.

18 NANCY GINSBURG: We are speaking consistently  
19 with the Administration, with MOCJ, that is with DDC.  
20 We are building a facility in the Bronx that is  
21 geared towards - it's a trauma focused building that  
22 will have adequate space that we are lacking now.  
23 These facilities were built 20 years ago for a much  
24 younger population of young people who stay for much  
25 shorter periods of time. We are now holding almost

1  
2 exclusively a population of young people between the  
3 ages of 16 and 20 who were formerly held on Rikers  
4 Island before Raise the Age who are charged with  
5 serious offenses that are extremely complex and take  
6 quite some time to resolve in the courts.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you. Uhm, for -  
8 maybe for later but if you could share the breakdown  
9 of pretrial versus folks that are serving a sentence.  
10 That would be helpful.

11 NANCY GINSBURG: About 95 percent of the young  
12 people are pretrial.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you. That says it  
14 all. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I believe Council Member  
16 Williams had a follow up question. Oh, she's not  
17 here. Look at that. I'll pass it back to Council  
18 Member Joseph.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Council Member - okay.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Yes, I got  
21 clarification, it was that the teachers don't have  
22 the keys and so that has caused struggles within some  
23 of the facilities because the teachers don't have the  
24 keys to get in and out of certain spaces and places  
25 in the facility. So, if you can explain that, around

1  
2 that, why does that exist? Why don't teachers have  
3 keys?

4 NANCY GINSBURG: Teachers don't have keys due to  
5 safety issues.

6 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What's the safety issues?

7 GLENDA ESPERANCE: You can correct me if I'm  
8 wrong. I believe the safety issue that Nancy is  
9 referring to is that if they have the keys on them,  
10 then what has been raised with regard to safety from  
11 ACS is that the students might try to take the keys.  
12 I could be wrong but -

13 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Yes and this is all  
14 coming back to me now so thank you so much to the  
15 person who text me. You know who you are because I  
16 remember specifically, she said that there has been  
17 numerous occasions where teachers needed to move  
18 around and they were not able to do that because they  
19 were at like, they were beholding to an ACS worker.  
20 So, it was having essentially like negative impacts  
21 on them. Like, just - let's just make up something.  
22 Like, they want to start the class. They need to get  
23 into the classroom but they can't move around the  
24 building because the ACS worker is somewhere else.  
25 Those were some of the things that I had heard.

1  
2 NANCY GINSBURG: Well, there are quarter staff  
3 who can open the classrooms and there are youth  
4 development specialists who are on the school floor  
5 who are always available to open the classrooms. So,  
6 I do think we were struggling with that much more in  
7 the past and it has been mitigated. I'm not going to  
8 say there's never an issue but for the most part,  
9 when teachers are on route to a location, there is a  
10 staff member who can facilitate their entry.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Yeah, I think part of  
12 the problem though with this whole thing is that uhm,  
13 because there has been so many challenges in the  
14 past, that it's so hard to regain everyone's trust  
15 that you are actually rectifying these issues. So, I  
16 hear you because I was going to say, maybe this was  
17 an issue in the past. Maybe there was like a you  
18 know and then you have these like extreme cases and  
19 not that the extreme cases mean it happens all the  
20 time but then you have this extreme case that people  
21 learn about and then, there is like so much work to  
22 do to gain peoples credibility and trust that you're  
23 rectifying but okay. That was it. That's the thing  
24 that I wanted to mention because from what I have  
25 been told and the person who I spoke to actually is

1  
2 technically a DOE employee. They were - they retired  
3 but they were like a guidance counselor within one of  
4 the facilities for a very long time and she cited  
5 that it's like a major issue. So, that's why I  
6 wanted to raise it.

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And I don't know, uhm just  
8 help me understand and I know they said for safety  
9 reasons but what makes ACS staff more qualified to  
10 have the keys then DOE staff? Like, I'm not  
11 understanding the safety component there. So, why is  
12 it safe for ACS staff to have it and then not the DOE  
13 staff? I just - what is - I'm confused.

14 NANCY GINSBURG: Our staff is trained in managing  
15 the young people if they do things that they're not  
16 supposed to do. So, they're not supposed to have  
17 access to the keys and sometimes a young person might  
18 want to leave a location where they are. They're not  
19 allowed to do that and sometimes they will try to get  
20 access to the keys to do so. We don't want a teacher  
21 to be in the position where they have to manage that.  
22 So, our staff is differently trained and -

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, this is training thing?  
24 So, if teachers were saying like hey, I want to be  
25 trained because you know I'm - because I think that -

1  
2 I'm just trying to get at like that could be a  
3 deterrent for someone wanting to be there and this is  
4 just to say like oh well this person is training or  
5 not. Like, is that a training issue then? Is that  
6 something that you guys ever even considered of like  
7 can be a deterrent for people? Because I would think  
8 as a like being - listen, I worked at a YEBC and it  
9 was like some weird things like that that happened  
10 within our facility too and I just didn't understand  
11 and so, I'm just trying to just get a better  
12 understanding of like then so why wouldn't we train  
13 the teachers to be able to also be able to keep  
14 themselves safe and be able to de-escalate those  
15 things?

16 NANCY GINSBURG: Our agency partners are not  
17 trained in safe crisis management, which is our tools  
18 for managing these issues. It has not come to my  
19 attention that any teacher has requested to be  
20 trained. Generally, the way the facilities work is  
21 that the uniformed staff are trained and the  
22 nonuniformed staff do not engage in those practices  
23 that is the role of the uniformed staff.

24 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, only uniformed staff  
25 has keys? Nonuniformed staff does not.

1  
2 NANCY GINSBURG: Uhm, uniformed staff has keys  
3 for the corridors and for the classrooms.

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: But that wasn't my  
5 question. So, does nonuniformed staff have keys to  
6 the facilities to be able to get it out? Because I  
7 know you said - I'm going to wrap up though because  
8 some of this -

9 NANCY GINSBURG: Not our agency partners.

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I know, I know not the  
11 agency partners but the question I'm asking is  
12 because you just said the uniformed staff and the  
13 nonuniformed staff are trained differently but then I  
14 know you also said that folks who were in the  
15 corridors, like the youth specialists, do they have  
16 keys?

17 NANCY GINSBURG: Yes, they have keys.

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Again, this is a place  
19 where I think we need to look because that could be a  
20 term for teachers wanting to be there, right? And  
21 so, I know we have a whole bunch of other questions  
22 and I'm going to wrap up but I think that that's a  
23 little strange to me.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. At Horizon, how  
25 many classrooms are used for sleeping quarters?

1

NANCY GINSBURG: Right now, one.

2

3

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And for the other facility?

4

NANCY GINSBURG: Right now, one.

5

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: One not three to five?

6

NANCY GINSBURG: No, right now, one.

7

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: One for both sites?

8

NANCY GINSBURG: Right.

9

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, thank you. With  
regards to indicating the reason for a student's  
absent, can you confirm the definition of the R Code  
and explain when and why and whom is it entered?

10

11

12

13

NANCY GINSBURG: I'm sorry, can you repeat the  
question?

14

15

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: With regards to indicating  
the reason for a student's absence, can you confirm  
the definition of the R Code and explain why and by  
whom it's entered?

16

17

18

19

NANCY GINSBURG: I'm sorry, that's a New York  
City Public School.

20

21

GLEND A ESPERANCE: So, the Release Code 90 is  
used when students don't have the opportunity to  
attend school due to a decision made by the host  
agency. So, for example, if ACS doesn't bring a  
student, a group of students to school, like I said

22

23

24

25

1  
2 earlier because of a flooding concern or safety  
3 concerns, that's when the Code is used. So, note  
4 that with an attendance release, students are not  
5 counted as absent because they did not have the  
6 opportunity to attend school. Release Code 90, that  
7 R Code is only available for youth in East River  
8 Academy, as well as for ACS.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And who enters that Code?

10 GLENDA ESPERANCE: We do. We enter it.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You enter it.

12 GLENDA ESPERANCE: Hmm, hmm.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, is the R-Code  
14 exclusively for escort related absence or does DOE  
15 apply for other types of operational barriers inside  
16 the detention? What is it used, exclusively used for  
17 that?

18 GLENDA ESPERANCE: The R-code is exclusively used  
19 when students are not brought to the classrooms.  
20 That's the R-Code that's used.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, uhm can New York Public  
22 School distinguish between absence caused by ACS,  
23 missed escort and absence caused by facility-wide,  
24 for example, a lock down, classroom unavailability.  
25 If so, what are the codes?

1  
2       GLEENDA ESPERANCE: That is something that we can  
3 explore but we do have different absent codes when  
4 students like I said are sick.

5       CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Would you be able to get  
6 that back to the Committee? That is something we  
7 would love to see.

8       GLEENDA ESPERANCE: Okay, definitely.

9       CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, and do you do any  
10 internal audits or R Codes Absence? If not, why not?

11       GLEENDA ESPERANCE: I'm sorry, can you repeat that  
12 again?

13       CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Do you conduct any internal  
14 audit of the R Code absences?

15       GLEENDA ESPERANCE: We do. So, with our R Code  
16 absences, as Nancy shared, we have weekly meetings.

17       CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Hmm, hmm.

18       GLEENDA ESPERANCE: And so, we discuss uhm the  
19 absence, the attendance issues during that meeting.  
20 That's one of the agenda items each week.

21       CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And then when you meet, do  
22 you come up with solutions as to how do we lower  
23 those numbers of absences for students attending  
24 these - coming to classes.  
25

1  
2       GLEENDA ESPERANCE: That's always the work at that  
3 collaborative meeting is how do we triage and come up  
4 with a comprehensive plan to address it.

5       CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: We would love to see what  
6 that plan looked like. What percentage of total  
7 absence for youth in detention are coded as R and  
8 what are the other codes? What are the percentage  
9 for the other codes as well?

10       GLEENDA ESPERANCE: Yeah, hold on. Currently for  
11 this current school year, it is 16 percent 16 or 17  
12 percent for this current. So, as of September 1 to  
13 11, 12, 16 percent.

14       CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay and the other codes,  
15 what are some of the percentages?

16       GLEENDA ESPERANCE: Uhm, I know I have it, so some  
17 of the and we don't - I can forward that information  
18 to you.

19       CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Hmm, hmm, the Committee is  
20 interested in that.

21       GLEENDA ESPERANCE: Yes, I just want to give you  
22 like some other codes. It's like absent, agency  
23 appointment, illness, special events, special - so I  
24 can send that information to you.  
25

1

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: That would be very helpful.

3 How many R-Coded absence were recorded in the last  
4 school year at Horizon and Crossroad and how does  
5 this compare to the two previous years?

6 GLENDA ESPERANCE: Uhm, give me one second  
7 because I know that's included in the Legal Law 200.  
8 I just have to find the page, give me a second.

9 So, we don't necessarily have it by a percentage  
10 but on the legal, on the Local Law 21, uhm document,  
11 you do see it on Page 14 and so that insight is  
12 there, and then it's also on - only because it's just  
13 all the different numbers. I don't want to just  
14 throw numbers out at you and that's also in the 2022-  
15 2024 version of the document.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: The students with  
17 disabilities, does New York City Public School report  
18 R-Coded absence to New York State Education  
19 Department?

20 GLENDA ESPERANCE: We have well the Code is  
21 documented in their attendance records, so we follow  
22 along with them.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: It follows along with them  
24 okay, and you said earlier, you do meet for  
25

corrective action for if a student shows up for too many times absence, you provide that.

GLENDASPERANCE: Absolutely, yeah.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Hmm, okay. Earlier, I'm going to do a follow up real quick on Chair Stevens question. Uhm, we found that 78, advocates for children found that nearly 78 percent of students discharged were expected to reenroll in New York city Public Schools, yet many receive no transition assistance and that's something I heard before. So, what are we doing differently when they go back to community? How do you re-enroll students and provide the support or do you sometimes provide a safety transfer from one school to another? Do you facilitate that?

GLENDASPERANCE: So, we do facilitate it and that's why as I mentioned before, the work has been strengthening up that workstream, so we hired a - we designated an AP to oversee that work. We are hiring additional social workers to strengthen that work but then we've also been intentional with the Office of Student Enrollment that there is a desk need that works there that works in direct communication with us.

1  
2 We have also uhm and I know that my counterpart -  
3 not my counterpart but one of the superintendents  
4 that I work with was here maybe two weeks ago. One  
5 of the things that we've also found is that because  
6 of the needs of our students when they're  
7 transferring out back into the New York City Public  
8 Schools, is that we strengthen our partnership with  
9 the transfer schools because we found many of the  
10 students are in need of wrap around services in a  
11 smaller space setting.

12 We've also just overall, all the community  
13 superintendents as well as the high school sups, if  
14 there's a need we can always reach out to them so  
15 that they can help with expediting that process. And  
16 one of the things that we want to continue working on  
17 that we have in place is ensuring that even when the  
18 students move on, that we still do those wrap around  
19 services and those checks for them. And so, that's  
20 what we recognize is that we need more bodies because  
21 of the high numbers that have been coming to us and  
22 how the students are going back and returning.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Your colleagues two weeks  
24 ago, what I told them was transfer schools was a  
25 dumping ground with no support services for students.

1  
2 That's what I told your colleague two weeks ago on  
3 the record.

4 GLENDA ESPERANCE: But I want you to also know  
5 that one of the things that we have prided ourselves  
6 is to ensure that it is not a dumping ground because  
7 when we choose to send them to a transfer school, we  
8 vet it first. So, there is an online - I'm sorry,  
9 there's also a placement center that's there. We  
10 always want to make sure that our students are being  
11 placed in an environment that suits them. And so, we  
12 don't just give them one place, we always give them a  
13 choice of multiple places that they can go.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: We want that. We both love  
15 transfer schools and we just wish some of the - a lot  
16 of the services were in place when students get there  
17 and that's one thing I told your superintendent Mr.  
18 Sullivan, that they should be working on and  
19 providing support when the students return back to  
20 community. That they're not left alone and this  
21 should be a conversation with both agencies, right?  
22 What are the needs that made that student go down  
23 that path? How are we supporting them with all of  
24 the wrap around services, whether it's job, whether  
25 it's housing, whether it's counseling. That has to

1  
2 be around that student in order for that student to  
3 succeed.

4 GLENDA ESPERANCE: And can I also just extend  
5 because we absolutely agree with what you're lifting,  
6 what we've also been able to do is not only leverage  
7 the traditional models of going back to their home  
8 school but we leverage the resources that we do at  
9 large in District 79. So, we have some students that  
10 after placement, they might go to a traditional  
11 school but we've given them access to coop tech, so  
12 that they can get a skill or a trade that's there.  
13 If they go back to their home schools and they happen  
14 to be a student parent, we give them access to what  
15 we can give them at life.

16 If they happen to go back to their home school  
17 and they need credit recovery, we give them access to  
18 the YEBC. So, I think that some of the things when I  
19 talk about the transfer school, what we're working is  
20 collaboratively, is how do we leverage the resources  
21 that we have in D79 overall with the space and  
22 infrastructure that's in the transfer school so the  
23 students can get that wrap around services that you  
24 emphasized. That's definitely important that we  
25 agree with.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: It's important. I remember back in 2023, I brought this up and I'm going to bring this again, why do we continue to release young people from detention when our school placement despite New York State education legal requirement for transition planning in district liaison. How fast does someone - is already there to welcome that student and make sure they're going down the right path and having all the support in place?

GLENDA ESPERANCE: So, transition begins at the very beginning. So, uhm, I know that was something that you I think in one of the references was like how do we make sure that there's no interruption?

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Correct.

GLENDA ESPERANCE: So, we have outreach and we engage with the home schools to learn about what the student was doing, where their transcripts were, what's the most ideal pathway. And we have those conversations with the students and the parents throughout that students time that's here. Part of the assignment and I might say - not assignment but what happens to them when they're on the way out of passages it's not always - it's not determined by us. It really is determined by the courts. And once that

1  
2 information is provided to us, then we are able to  
3 thread them through the NP. So, in some cases, it  
4 might be that no, you have to stay longer. In some  
5 cases, you have to go to a different assignment. In  
6 some cases, it might be a nonpublic school setting.  
7 The only thing that we've noticed that we are working  
8 on, is that that information gets provided and it  
9 takes 24 hours for it to be uploaded but that's  
10 something that we're doing internally to make sure  
11 that it's very smooth and swift.

12 But the goal is to really expand the capacity of  
13 our teams because like I said, we have a high number  
14 of students who have been coming in and we just want  
15 to make sure that we have the capacity to give each  
16 one the individualized attention that they deserve.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How do you track students  
18 who fail to return to school after a discharge? Does  
19 ACS notify New York City Public Schools Courts or the  
20 Attorney's? How does that work?

21 GLENDA ESPERANCE: So, what we do internally is  
22 what we track is the number of students that once we  
23 have provided them this new space to go to, what  
24 their attendance record is like but I don't know what  
25 ACS's -

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: But the attendance before 17  
and 18 year old's average 42 percent in 2025. So,  
what happened to the rest of the 53?

GLENDA ESPERANCE: So, what we have found is that  
many of the students will begin and then when we do  
outreach some parents will say well, you know what  
the student doesn't want to come or there's numbers  
that are disconnected. So, that's what our work is  
to really make sure that we get them engaged. That  
we stay in communication, have those information -  
have the documents updated so that we can really stay  
engaged. Hence the reason why we want to broaden our  
work.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Are we using social workers  
and attendance teachers to collaborate and do that  
work together?

GLENDA ESPERANCE: We do do that but like I said,  
because it's the high volume that's coming to us, we  
do need more bodies to mend that piece.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, we got a lot of hiring  
to do as well.

GLENDA ESPERANCE: I don't know what AC- they  
don't do school transitions.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You do all the school transition and who is your partner in this work? What other agencies other than New York City Public Schools?

GLEND A ESPERANCE: The majority is New York - for the most part it's New York City Public Schools in our different departments but we can explore what other agencies can support us with this.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: We always say the agencies don't talk to each other when they should be doing this work in partnership and not in silos. Uhm, earlier you mentioned about transition specialists assigned to each detention facilities. What's the student ratio? What's the students specialists ratio?

GLEND A ESPERANCE: Give me one sec. So, I can give an overview of what we have across all.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And then you're going to send me the data, data drives this work guys. That's what we talk about, data drives this work. We cannot do it. I cannot pass a budget. I cannot.

GLEND A ESPERANCE: So, I'm not one to share because we do have some figures, so we have 14 social workers as well as ten counselors across all of our

1  
2 facilities. The social worker is a primary point  
3 person that's responsible for providing the supports  
4 students - transition support to the students and uhm  
5 the goal like I said is to keep expanding. But the  
6 ratio changes because remember it's very fluid with  
7 regards to how many students are coming in, versus  
8 how many students that are going out.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Just give me a figure right  
10 now. So, we're talking right now. What would be the  
11 student ratio? I know it changes; we know that.  
12 They're on a rotational basis; we get that but what's  
13 the student ratio for -

14 GLENDA ESPERANCE: So, the student ratio to -it's  
15 anywhere - I'm so sorry because I don't want to just  
16 misrepresent what I'm saying. So, it's on average of  
17 anywhere from 1 to 30 or 1 to 40 depending on how  
18 many students there are in need but that doesn't  
19 speak to the transition now but that speaks to the  
20 person that's almost like the case manager service  
21 and the student, and that's the lead.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Lead.

23 GLENDA ESPERANCE: Yeah and that -

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: 1 to 40, that's a lot.  
25

1  
2       GLEENDA ESPERANCE: That's why we're trying to  
3 onboard more staff members so that we can make sure  
4 that we can decrease those ratios because once again,  
5 the social workers are the ones that are in the lead  
6 of it but we have other members that are part of the  
7 transition team. So, we have the guidance  
8 counselors, teachers and so forth, part of that work.

9       CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: One of the things we talked  
10 and I know young people tell us this all the time.  
11 Is there any training for to support New York City  
12 Public Schools to reduce stigma and bias when young  
13 people return back to their home school? They're  
14 usually frowned upon.

15       GLEENDA ESPERANCE: I think that's the importance  
16 of why we lift the work that we do in District 79 and  
17 who our people are. It's - I don't think it's  
18 necessarily frowned upon and so, I know you're saying  
19 that they're frowned upon. I know that there's some  
20 negative connotations that might be placed on these  
21 students but our motto is that a moment doesn't  
22 define your destiny. And knowing that the path to  
23 rehabilitation is education and that's something that  
24 we always make sure that we uplift about the great  
25

1  
2 work that's happening while our students are in our  
3 custody.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah, but outside. Now that  
5 they've left you, they went back to their home  
6 school, is there training for Administrators and  
7 Educators when they walk back into the building to  
8 feel welcome. Things happen, right? Life happened  
9 and they're back and our whole mission in society is  
10 to make sure we're giving second chances to young  
11 people, right?

12 Are there trainings for bias and stigma when a  
13 young person go back to their home school?

14 GLEND A ESPERANCE: So, we've had conversation  
15 with Olsen and that's been the work of how do we make  
16 sure that our process is as tight as it can be, so  
17 that when the students come back it is a fresh start.  
18 They're being reentered so it's a warm pass off. So,  
19 we've been leveraging our social workers that we have  
20 citywide so that they are training and they are  
21 onboarding that group that brings the students back  
22 into the community.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many of the students do  
24 you track that go back to their home school? How  
25 many go and how many doesn't go back and how do you

1  
2 keep track of them and how many have you lost in the  
3 system?

4 GLENDA ESPERANCE: So, I'm going to say with  
5 regards to the home school, the law is that within a  
6 year if you go back to your - within a year, you have  
7 the right to return back to your home school. Many  
8 of our students who are in these settings are being  
9 displaced for more than year because what was  
10 mentioned earlier because of the complexity of their  
11 cases, so they're with us a lot longer but the goal  
12 is that we find them a space that conducive to the  
13 needs. So, even if they're not going back to their  
14 home school, we always provide them a list of  
15 possibly three schools that they can go to and we are  
16 in constant communication with those families that if  
17 those three schools didn't work, that we provide  
18 other opportunities.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I bet you I'm going to hear  
20 differently from the parents because I know there are  
21 parents in the audience ready to testify. I'm sure  
22 it's going to be different. How does New York City  
23 Public School provide additional academic support to  
24 recently discharged youth and how is it supported and  
25 tracked for effectiveness and do you provide -

1  
2 earlier you talked about the training and the  
3 colleges. Is there a survey when young people enter  
4 the system to - do they get a survey or when they  
5 leave and is there an exit plan?

6 GLENDA ESPERANCE: When the students leave there  
7 is an exit plan because we believe that a high school  
8 diploma is not the end, it's the beginning and so  
9 part of that reentry plan that we do with them going  
10 back into a New York City Public School setting  
11 speaks about the assessment of what they've done when  
12 they were with us.

13 So, as you've asked before, one of the things  
14 that we make sure is that we do an evaluation of  
15 their transcripts, and then we also make sure that  
16 the work that they're getting while they're with us  
17 is adhering to that. So, like for one example, we  
18 had a student that came to us and uhm it was in the  
19 middle of a semester. The student came to us in the  
20 middle of the semester, was able to connect with that  
21 home school, get all the resources, get all the work  
22 done so that when a student transitioned back in,  
23 they didn't skip a beat and they were eligible for  
24 graduation.  
25

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I'm going to pass it on to  
Chair Stevens and she'll pass it back to me.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, we have a lot of  
questions. I just - I just had a really quick  
question. I know uhm before you had mentioned that  
ACS staff is trained with Crisis Management. That's  
the training that you guys still use currently,  
correct?

NANCY GINSBURG: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay, uhm, so that was  
created in 1982 and apparently that was to - when you  
know they, the folks were working with younger youth  
and they were like much lighter weight. Does ACS  
think that it might be appropriate to start looking  
for some more up to date trainings for staff?  
Because I'm getting messages that you know they feel  
like it might not be appropriate for the setting any  
more.

NANCY GINSBURG: Well, we just started - we did a  
small pilot of verbal deescalation training, which we  
believe is going to be an important addition to SCM.  
We are planning to roll this out across the  
continuum. We did a small pilot with our providers  
and some staff in secure detention. Relationship, we

1  
2 have found that relationship is critical in  
3 mitigating conflict in the facilities and often when  
4 the young people are in relationship with the staff,  
5 the conflicts are addressed much more quickly and by  
6 providing additional skills and training to allow our  
7 staff the tools to approach young people when they're  
8 dysregulated or upset. We have seen our most skilled  
9 staff be able to mitigate conflicts quite quickly and  
10 we are hoping that this additional training will  
11 address many of those issues.

12 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, no agreed, building  
13 relationships with the young people is the best tool  
14 that we have and I 100 percent understand that but I  
15 think still making sure that they have options or  
16 training. Do you do joint trainings with like your  
17 ACS staff and like DOE or other partners that's in  
18 the facilities? Are any of those trainings joint or  
19 is it done separately?

20 NANCY GINSBURG: We have done joint trainings.

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Is that something that's  
22 done regularly or is that like runoffs? What does  
23 that training schedule look like?

24 GLENDA ESPERANCE: Some of the trainings that  
25 we've done collaboratively are things that uhm kind

1  
2 of overlap in the workstream that we do and then  
3 there's some trainings that are done separately.

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, obviously. That's  
5 why I'm asking do you guys have like - what is the  
6 cadence of those trainings and do you guys have a  
7 list of what those trainings might be that you're  
8 doing collaboratively? Because I think that it is  
9 important that like when people are in these places  
10 that training and things are happening consistently.  
11 And so, do you guys have like a list of trainings  
12 because this wasn't a question. This one is a pop  
13 quiz, so if you don't have the list, I would love for  
14 you guys to send the list because I would love to see  
15 like what and how the collaboration efforts are  
16 happening in those training moments and spaces and  
17 how frequently it happens.

18 GLENDA ESPERANCE: We can forward that.

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. Okay uhm I have some  
20 questions about students with disabilities. How does  
21 ACS ensure that youth are escorted to schools for IEP  
22 services?

23 NANCY GINSBURG: So, we work - we have meetings  
24 with school staff every morning. The Youth  
25 Development Specialists who are responsible for

1  
2 bringing the young people to school. There will be a  
3 meeting in the morning to identify which young people  
4 have - are scheduled for counseling sessions and  
5 there are specific efforts made to ensure that those  
6 young people come to see their counselors.

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What internal logs is this  
8 showing how many IEP sessions are missed due to  
9 escorts or lock ins?

10 GLENDA ESPERANCE: We are 100 percent compliance  
11 with our special education plans.

12 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: But you don't keep track of  
13 when they miss services or anything like that?

14 GLENDA ESPERANCE: What we do - we don't - what  
15 I'm saying is that with regards to that like when  
16 you're saying with their lockdowns and so forth, the  
17 goal is always to do service recovery.

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. How does ACS notify  
19 DOE when a student with disabilities is not brought  
20 to school? Is it the same notifications of any other  
21 student?

22 NANCY GINSBURG: Yes.

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Does ACS participate in  
24 cross agency meetings on IEP compliance?  
25

1  
2 NANCY GINSBURG: Uhm, if we're invited into that  
3 space, we will participate.

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, I know sometimes that  
5 gets real difficult. I was in schools. It becomes  
6 tricky but I will say when we weren't invited in, it  
7 often got difficult for us to be able to do the work.  
8 And so, I think that those are places where we really  
9 need to figure out a better system.

10 GLENDA ESPERANCE: So, I just want to share on  
11 what we - just to kind of piggyback on the fact that  
12 we do have weekly meetings and when we have the  
13 weekly meetings around the students, sometimes we  
14 highlight specific students as well. So, it's not  
15 just a meeting about things that can be done, it's a  
16 collaboration. I'm not sure what Lanie's title, I'm  
17 sorry but I know there's an educational point that  
18 will be a part of those conversations with us when we  
19 look at a particular student and the needs that they  
20 have. So, even if they can't be there directly in  
21 the moment because we're scheduling them you know  
22 throughout and we want to make sure that we do them  
23 all within 30 days but we do definitely here for them  
24 and uhm and engage with them to hear insight about  
25 the students. For a lack of a better space, when

1  
2 they're not in the school setting because remember  
3 these students are here all the time.

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, they live there.

5 GLENDA ESPERANCE: Yeah, they live there and so,  
6 we want to hear like the same way we would engage  
7 with the parents to find out how they were at home  
8 prior to being incarcerated, prior to being detained.  
9 We also get that information from - there are staff  
10 members in this space as well.

11 What training do Youth Development Specialists  
12 staff receive on educational rights of students with  
13 disabilities?

14 NANCY GINSBURG: We don't train them in that.

15 GLENDA ESPERANCE: We do train them in what the  
16 basic needs, education needs are and the Youth  
17 Development Specialists who are assigned to the  
18 school and supporting the school are in daily  
19 conversation with Passages leadership and staff.

20 So, if a particular student needs a particular  
21 service, the YDS are aware of that and they are  
22 supporting that.

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Hmm, I would love to see us  
24 figure out how to make sure we're supporting young  
25 people with disabilities because even them saying

1  
2 like they're getting the services, I think that  
3 having a better understanding of why and the follow  
4 up behind is just as important as well.

5 How does ACS ensure program flow, housing cohorts  
6 and lock-in procedures don't interfere with IEP  
7 services?

8 NANCY GINSBURG: It is our goal to deliver every  
9 young person to school every day and that includes  
10 students with disabilities and not with disabilities,  
11 and so to the extent that we can, we do our best  
12 every day to ensure access to school.

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How does ACS coordinate  
14 with DOE to reenroll youth in community schools after  
15 discharging from Close to Homes?

16 NANCY GINSBURG: Uhm, I'm not under- uhm-

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How do you coordinate with  
18 DOE to like reenroll youth in community school or in  
19 schools after they're discharged from Close to Homes?  
20 Like, is it the same because I know that they have a  
21 transitional team but like how does ACS follow with  
22 some of that work for our students who are leading  
23 the Close to Homes programs?

24 NANCY GINSBURG: So, in Close to Home, the  
25 agencies follow the young people for six months after

1  
2 discharge and so those conversations, the aftercare  
3 conversations and the Fair Futures coaches who are  
4 working with the young people will interact with the  
5 school where the young person is enrolled and will  
6 support in attendance.

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay, so part of the Close  
8 to Homes contracts is a six month aftercare piece?

9 NANCY GINSBURG: Yes, Close to Home, yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, why don't we do that  
11 with all the kids?

12 NANCY GINSBURG: Because detention is a much  
13 different - in Close to Home, we know when the young  
14 person is going to be released because they are  
15 leaving after a sentence. The court does not control  
16 those releases. The court control the releases in  
17 detention and the young people who leave detention  
18 and reenter the community generally have open cases  
19 and are represented by counsel and have plans that  
20 are developed by their counsel and the courts.

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What happens when the kids  
22 don't have that?

23 GLENDA ESPERANCE: I'm sorry, say that again.

24 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I was asking because she  
25 said that with the counsel, like a lot of times

1  
2 that's done through the courts and their counsel but  
3 what happens to the students who don't have a plan  
4 from the counsel or they are being discharged. What  
5 happens in those instances?

6 NANCY GINSBURG: We are in conversation with the  
7 young people and their parents and so, sometimes a  
8 young person or a family member might ask for  
9 support. Part of the reason -

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, they have to ask for  
11 it?

12 NANCY GINSBURG: Well part of their - every young  
13 person has a case manager and so the case manager is  
14 talking to the young person about what their plans  
15 are after discharge and sometimes a young person  
16 might say they're going to do something on a  
17 referral. That referral may not work out. The young  
18 person may not want that particular service after  
19 going. So, they might call the facility and ask for  
20 another referral, and so that ongoing referral  
21 process is happening and one of the big reasons why  
22 we onboarded the Assistant Commissioner of Reentry is  
23 to develop a more solidified model and practice  
24 around reentry support.  
25

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And the new - this new  
role, they have started in this role yet?

NANCY GINSBURG: They're in week two.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. Yeah, no I just -  
because I think that it's important like yes, if  
there's instances where you know they're going you  
know maybe upstate or whatever and that's fine but  
there are students or young people who are being  
discharged and kind of left to figure it out. And it  
is traumatizing to have to call the facility to get  
another referral. And so, there should be a plan and  
if we - and even with like Close to Homes, if we see  
that that's a necessity there, why wouldn't we be  
doing that with all the young people? Because a lot  
of the reasons they're in these predicaments is  
because of lack of services and lack of resources and  
not necessarily - might not have the know how to find  
those services. So, I think uhm I'm really happy to  
hear that there's a transitional person now because  
that is a clear gap in what is missing in some of  
this.

GLEND A ESPERANCE: And I just want to kind of  
just echo in what the work will be that we work  
collaboratively some of the things that you've been

1  
2 saying with regard to that transition because it's a  
3 heavy load for us to try to do.

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah.

5 GLENDA ESPERANCE: But we will pull our resources  
6 so that we can come up with a plan to echo what you  
7 said that we make sure that everybody is watched.

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah.

9 NANCY GINSBURG: And one of the benefits of our  
10 relationship with our nonprofit partners, Children's  
11 Village, BPI, CCA also provides services, is that  
12 they also can provide referrals to young people and  
13 follow them in the community, and we have seen young  
14 people you know doing well in services that have been  
15 referred by those partners.

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Listen, I hear you but then  
17 if we're going to ask partners to do that, because  
18 they are doing it we should then pay them to do it.

19 NANCY GINSBURG: Well, they are paid to do it.  
20 It's part of their contract.

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, if that's part of the  
22 contract then that was the question that I was  
23 asking. Alright, I'm not going down that rabbit  
24 hole. Alright, I don't have any more questions right  
25 now. I'll pass it back to Council Member Joseph.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Thank you so much. The question I have around a report released this morning by Advocates for Children found that a total of 16.5 percent of students with IEP's between 2023 and 2025 did not receive their legally mandated - did not receive a special education plan within 30 days of enrollment at Passages Academy, as New York City Public School isn't legally required to provide that. What attributes to this failure?

GLEND A ESPERANCE: So, I mentioned it but I'll reiterate again. So, if it's 16 percent, that means that it's 84 percent that did. That means 84 percent received their Special Education Plan within 30 days. The ones that do not have it within 30 days, I'll share again. One of the biggest issues is that we want to make sure that the parents are part of those conversations, so it takes a little bit longer because we don't want to do it without their inclusion. But I'm always happy to report that we have 100 percent compliance between it being within 30 and not in 30 days. But the majority of them, the vast majority of them are done within 30 days.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I would love to see a zero percent, that's the goal.

1  
2       GLEENDA ESPERANCE: Well, that's the goal and  
3 that's where it's been. It went from 21 - like you  
4 know I'm very honest. So, it went from 79 to 88 and  
5 so the goal is to get to 100. All of them are done  
6 within 30 days but we are really committed to making  
7 sure that the parents are involved in it and so, if  
8 it is the 29<sup>th</sup> day and the parent said, I can't make  
9 it. Can we extend? We do extend but our goal is to  
10 make sure that we have all our parents involved.

11       CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yes, and the New York City  
12 Public School plan to remedy the mismatch between  
13 students need and services provided. How do you  
14 match the student's needs? I know it's on the SEP  
15 but sometimes we miss it.

16       GLEENDA ESPERANCE: So, what we do - that's why we  
17 hired the Administrators so that we don't miss it.  
18 The goal has been to review what's being required and  
19 what's being asked for and that's our cross reference  
20 to make sure that those things are actually happening  
21 and one of the things like I said earlier that we're  
22 very proud of is that if there are those gaps, we've  
23 partnered with Special Education, DIAL, so that we  
24 can have those seed programs. So, those missed  
25

opportunities that are not happening during the day  
can be remedied on the weekends.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many psychologists do  
you have?

GLENDA ESPERANCE: Two.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: But nearly 40 percent of  
your students are classified with special needs.

GLENDA ESPERANCE: So, the psychologists would be  
the ones that would be doing the reevaluation and we  
don't have a large population of students that do  
reevaluations and renewals but we do have a large  
population of pedagogy in special education and our  
goal is to every year increase that headcount of  
special education teachers.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And what's the timeline for  
that?

GLENDA ESPERANCE: Uhm, so the timeline has been  
to onboard at least four special education teachers  
each year. Unfortunately, what we're facing is that  
many of our teachers have been here for such a long  
time, so as we onboard, there's some that retire and  
so, we are really trying to be more aggressive with  
how many people that we're onboarding but then we  
also are making sure that we're intentional of this

1  
2 training. All of our teachers with regards to MTSS  
3 and different strategies that whether a student has  
4 an IEP or not, that you're able to meet the different  
5 performance levels that they're facing.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Will you share the IEP  
7 compliance data with us? We'd love - the Committee  
8 would love to see that.

9 GLENDA ESPERANCE: I hear you, okay.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yes, thank you. Our English  
11 Language Learners, according to Advocates for  
12 Children found that 216 English Language Learners who  
13 are enrolled during the 2023, 2024, 2024-2025, nearly  
14 a quarter receive no English as a new language  
15 instruction while in ACS custody. What does New York  
16 City Public Schools attribute to this failure?

17 GLENDA ESPERANCE: So, I'm going to share again  
18 at this point right now, our current compliance rate  
19 is 91 percent. We have a total of 42 students who -  
20 we have a total of 46 students who require ENL  
21 instruction and there's four that's not receiving -  
22 well technically not in compliance because we have an  
23 ENL teacher who has just recently retired. What  
24 we've done though is that we've hired a sub that's  
25 delivering the services but because it's not a full

1  
2 time person, we don't hit the five out of the you  
3 know there's five different components, we only hit  
4 the four out of the five to receive full components.  
5 What we are intentional but at Crossroads, specially  
6 in Horizon, those students are receiving their  
7 services. We know specifically what facility we have  
8 the gap and we've been working with our district  
9 Level L department to make sure that those needs are  
10 being addressed.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Well, the Office of  
12 Multilanguage Learners is supporting that? Are they  
13 working with you to support to provide the English  
14 Language Learners instructions?

15 GLENDA ESPERANCE: They definitely do. We have a  
16 great partnership with the folks that oversee that  
17 department and that's why you know we can proudly say  
18 that we're at 91 percent of compliance and our  
19 students are receiving the instruction but because we  
20 don't have a permanent replacement we've been using a  
21 sub that's why we're getting hit with the compliance  
22 piece.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, so we have to fill  
24 that in.  
25

1  
2 GLENDA ESPERANCE: Yeah, we're definitely  
3 aggressively hiring once again if there's an ENL  
4 person listening to this, please forward your resume,  
5 we are looking for them.

6 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I love to tell agencies and  
7 folks that they should always send it out to all of  
8 the Council Members because we are always getting  
9 things and we're always underutilized, so please send  
10 it out to us so that -

11 GLENDA ESPERANCE: We send it to all.

12 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: All 51 of us.

13 GLENDA ESPERANCE: We will share it with you.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And we'll share it.

15 GLENDA ESPERANCE: We appreciate that.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Uhm, how does New York City  
17 Public School determine school budgets for Passages  
18 Academy and Restart Academy?

19 GLENDA ESPERANCE: So, we have an allocation  
20 that's given to us, so I'm just going to review it so  
21 I don't speak out of turn.

22 So, we have three key funding. So, we have  
23 federal funds, example, Title 1 neglected and  
24 delinquent Title 3. Uhm, we get tax levy restricted,  
25 which is uhm 8080, tax levy 8080 money and tax levy

1  
2 [INAUDIBLE 02:37:02] funds, and then we have tax levy  
3 unrestricted, which is also tax levy instructional  
4 programs for D79-Close to Home.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And how do you use - do you  
6 use any per pupil calculation?

7 GLENDA ESPERANCE: We uhm, we do not do per pupil  
8 and we do not have like the fair student funding  
9 piece but we do encourage your advocacy for  
10 revisiting the funding formulas for these locations  
11 because many of the ones that we've had have been in  
12 place for a long time.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Hmm, yeah, we were very  
14 instrumental in changing that. How much funding did  
15 each school receive for 2025 and 2026 school year?

16 GLENDA ESPERANCE: So, we don't - it's not  
17 necessarily uhm even though we have two principals,  
18 it's still one budget combined. So, for the one  
19 budget combined, it's \$17,325,252.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Is there any  
21 pedagogical headcount associated with each school?  
22 What is the non-pedagogical?

23 GLENDA ESPERANCE: So, I have the pedagogical  
24 count that I can share with you. Uhm, we currently -  
25 well, I can give you all. So, we have 53 teachers, 3

1  
2 ENL, 3.5 ENL teachers, a total of - this is currently  
3 in place, not what's allocated. We have 11 special  
4 education teachers but as I've shared, some of them  
5 have since retired, 3 para's, 4 guidance counselors,  
6 2 psychologists, 14 social workers, that's a total of  
7 90. And the goal is to expand that staffing to meet  
8 the increased number of students that we're  
9 receiving.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Does any of those programs -  
11 these programs do not receive galaxy allocation?

12 GLENDA ESPERANCE: We get galaxy allocation but  
13 the funding source is different from what it would be  
14 in a traditional school.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. What is the number of  
16 youth in secured detention facilities who are  
17 enrolled in education programs? I just need a  
18 number.

19 GLENDA ESPERANCE: Hmm, enrollment as of  
20 11/12/2025, uhm we have 167 at Crossroads, 172 at  
21 Horizon, bringing the total to 339 versus the  
22 capacity being 110 at each site.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And you'll send us the  
24 breakdown by program for high school, high school  
25 equivalency, college courses, and any other?

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GLENDASPERANCE: I have that.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You can share them.

GLENDASPERANCE: So, for middle school level, we have a total of six between Crossroads and Horizon. We have 228 for Highschool Pathway and we have 71 who are HSC Pathway and then we have a small number that's Proscride(SP?) and the Proscride that we have is that we're just still really finalizing their transition pieces.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I just have one more question for you. Can you give me the breakdown of the type of certificate and educational programs for Crossroads and Horizon?

GLENDASPERANCE: When you say the type - so -

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Certificate and educational programs.

GLENDASPERANCE: So, I was going to say the educational pathways that we have is that you can obtain promotion by way for middle school students. For our high school pathways, we have traditional high school diploma and then we also do Regents diploma, and then for our HSC, it's high school equivalency.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Is there an alternative  
assessment for students with special needs?

GLEND A ESPERANCE: So, what I will say, we really  
pour into our students. We had a student uhm, I  
can't say his name but we had a student recently  
where they came in as an alternate assessment. We  
poured a lot of resources into them in combination  
with ACS with the tutoring, the Children's Village  
and that child was able to graduate with an HSC  
equivalency within three years.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Nice.

GLEND A ESPERANCE: And so, that's the work. You  
know our goal is wherever you come in with us, we  
pour in the resources because like I said, high  
school is not the end, it's the beginning and the  
only way to rehabilitate is to educate. That's our  
truest belief.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And is there a plan -  
earlier you mentioned middle school. Is there a plan  
to expand transfer middle schools? That was one of  
the questions I had. You only have one, it's Restart  
right?

1  
2       GLEENDA ESPERANCE: So, the Restart Academy that  
3 we have is something that we leverage. We have one  
4 but it's throughout the entire city.

5       CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay.

6       GLEENDA ESPERANCE: And so, we have one in each  
7 borough and we're looking to expand that. We've been  
8 in conversations with different superintendencies  
9 because we also want to make sure that we don't just  
10 open schools anywhere.

11       CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Correct.

12       GLEENDA ESPERANCE: Especially for our Restart  
13 population. We always embedded within the high  
14 school so the students get that social aspect and  
15 that they already see what the next step is. So, the  
16 work is always to expand our services in Restart, uhm  
17 so absolutely. These students that come from here  
18 always get priority entry and that's the one thing  
19 with Passages. Any student that goes through  
20 Passages Academy always has priority in any of our  
21 D79 programs.

22       CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. So, thank you. My  
23 next set of questions is for Chris. In your  
24 testimony you distinguished between food surplus and  
25 waste. Does OFNS currently collect data on surplus

1  
2 food and surplus waste at the school level? And is  
3 New York City Public School commit to collecting and  
4 re-putting data on surplus food and surplus waste, so  
5 we can ensure a successful pilot program?

6 CHRIS TRICARICO: Excellent question. Uhm, going  
7 back to the testimony, we distinguish between food  
8 waste, items taken but not consumed. Once a student  
9 takes food from the line, the shared table is  
10 available for them to leave and donate that food to  
11 the share table. Once they do go to their table and  
12 they decide not to eat one of the components that  
13 they did take, it does go in the trash.

14 When it comes to surplus, meaning what we  
15 ordered, we make sure to use everything that we  
16 order. We track inventory. We track inventory  
17 dates. In a case where a school may be evacuated and  
18 we need to donate the food, we can either move the  
19 food from site to site or we could actually donate  
20 it. Our goal is to not have any surplus at all. We  
21 track that. We make sure we're also monitoring spend  
22 as well as a number of meals being served annually,  
23 monthly, weekly, daily.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Your statement  
25 mentioned that your efforts to minimize waste include

1 staff training on accurate ordering, batch cooking.

2 Apart from training, how does your office monitor  
3 whether or not schools are implementing the training?  
4

5 CHRIS TRICARICO: We actually are carefully  
6 paying attention to student meal participation daily.  
7 We also look at student daily attendance. Principals  
8 must communicate with the kitchen to make sure we  
9 know the number of students that are there. We're  
10 cooking based on the number of students that are  
11 attending and the number of students for each period  
12 and also the specific menu item for that day. We  
13 know more popular items versus less popular items.  
14 We track all of the inventory that's there and we  
15 track the usage per day for every single student  
16 that's taking a meal.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Any other comments you'd  
18 like to make about the bill or feedback? Are you  
19 good?

20 CHRIS TRICARICO: I think this is an excellent  
21 way to continue to educate school community students.  
22 Uhm, we currently still have the Nutrition  
23 Collaborative, which is now in 400 schools. During  
24 the Nutrition Collaborative, we thank the Council and  
25 others for that. We're training school communities

on what food to take and what it should look like when they're actually taking it back to their table, discussing it with children, discussing it with their peers, as well as teachers actually understanding and how to teach food education standards in the classroom.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Well, thank you so much. We're all good today.

CHRIS TRICARICO: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

GLEND A ESPERANCE: Thank you. Always happy to hear from you and we implemented accordingly. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. We'll be around to see you.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: We're coming to visit. We were ready to come before but we're definitely coming to visit and I just want to make sure that I go on record of saying like you know, this is about making sure that the young people who are in these facilities are getting the supports that they need. Again, these were the concerns that the young people brought up to us and we want to make sure that we are being reflective of what their concerns are and also

1  
2 in no way either of us are advocating for the lacking  
3 of children but like I told ACS before, uhm, you're  
4 doing a service and so, everyone else needs to do  
5 their part to make sure that they're not getting to  
6 these facilities so that we can get these numbers  
7 down. Because that's part of the problem and so, you  
8 guys are in a weird predicament because I believe if  
9 you build it, they will come but the reality is we  
10 have allowed them to come, so we also need to be  
11 putting our heads together to figure out how to get  
12 these numbers down and can't use the excuse of Raise  
13 the Age because we knew that was coming and we should  
14 have prepared for that and the governor should be  
15 paying for those services and all the things. And  
16 so, some of those things are out of your control but  
17 I wanted to make sure that we are working together to  
18 do everything that we can to have the higher standard  
19 for our young people and the people who show up to  
20 work there every day for everyone.

21 And so, this is really what this is about and  
22 thank you for your continued collaboration and  
23 working together with us.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

25 GLENDA ESPERANCE: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I now open the hearing for public testimony. I remind the members of the public; this is a formal government proceeding and that decorum shall be observed. As such, members of the public shall remain silent at all times.

The witness table is reserved for people who wish to testify, no video recordings or photography is allowed from the witness table. Further, members of the public may not present audio or video regarding the testimony but they may submit transcripts of such recordings to the Sergeant of Arms for including in the hearing recording. If you wish to speak in today's hearing, please fill out an appearance card with the Sergeant of Arms and wait to be recognized. When recognized, you have two minutes to speak on today's hearing topic, Educational Access in New York City Juvenile Detention Centers.

If you have a witness statement or additional written testimony you wish to submit for the record, please provide a copy of that testimony to the Sergeant at Arms. I now call the first panel. Melinda Andrews, Danasia Boone, uhm Belkys Rivera, Sharlena Clough, and Darek Robinson.

1  
2 MELINDA ANDRA: Good afternoon. My name is  
3 Melinda Andra. I am an attorney with the Education  
4 Advocacy Project at the Legal Aid Society. I have  
5 the fortune of working with incredible resilient  
6 young people who want a second chance and who want to  
7 be successful. Unfortunately, many of them face  
8 extreme challenges including coming from low income  
9 communities, having experienced foster care, having  
10 been disengaged from school and many of them have  
11 disabilities and their needs have never been met in  
12 the public school system.

13 ACS and the New York City Public Schools have a  
14 unique opportunity to remediate some of these past  
15 failures on the part of our city and unfortunately  
16 they are failing in that. We hear over and over  
17 again from our clients that they are not being  
18 brought to school, even when they voice a desire to  
19 go.

20 We have constant complaints from both Crossroads  
21 and from Horizon about that issue. We have reports  
22 as mentioned earlier of young people sleeping in  
23 hallways and in classrooms, making those spaces  
24 unavailable for young people for learning. And as  
25 pointed out earlier in the testimony, approximately

60 percent of the absences in last years report were under the Code R due to the agency, not because the child was sick or had court.

We appreciate ACS's efforts to provide tutoring but tutoring is no substitute for school, particularly for a young person with a disability. We see students with disabilities not receiving the appropriate levels of support. There are child fine violations, no annual reviews are happening, and without extraordinary efforts on the part of attorney's and families, SEPs or boiler plate and offer what the facility has rather than what the child needs.

In conclusion, we want to thank you for holding the DOE and ACS responsible for these issues and we will have further information in our written report. Thank you.

DANASIA BOONE: Good afternoon. My name is Danasia Boone. I work under OPWDD. My son is incarcerated in Horizons. He isn't going to school because there is lack of staff. We have discussed this in court. I have discussed this with staff in there. Also, the children are hungry and this was discussed before. Last night as well, them not

1  
2 having the proper food or not eating at a certain  
3 time. These are growing boys. I understand that  
4 they are there for a reason but if they're not  
5 learning anything in there, how are they going to  
6 change when it's time to come home? And on top of  
7 that, the facilities need to be cleaned better. Like  
8 if ACS is in control of this, certain things need to  
9 be in order. I feel like there's too many excuses  
10 going on or it's not in the budget or you know, they  
11 short staffed it but there's people out there that's  
12 willing to work. You have to give them a chance and  
13 stop trying to uhm overlook certain things. And  
14 another thing, is when my son got out last year, no  
15 one from Passages reached out. I had to go into the  
16 Board of Education and they told me because of my  
17 son's charges that he can only go to a school that  
18 has metal detectors. So, when I reached out to  
19 probation, probation found a school for them and the  
20 school said, "honestly you know, we don't really want  
21 him here if he's not going to take uh education  
22 seriously because it's going to be online.

23 BELKYS RIVERA: Thank you Council for the  
24 opportunity letting me speak. Thank you. Uhm, I  
25 want to express my growing concern about my son's

1  
2 education at the juvenile center. As a parent,  
3 academic process and daily access to schooling is  
4 extremely important for me. Thank you.

5 I want to make sure that all the children in  
6 these facilities are receiving the consistent support  
7 that they need. Over the past month, I have learned  
8 that there are days when our kids are not taken to  
9 school or when they are told that the classroom has  
10 reached a maximum number of students. So, no one  
11 else is being brought to school.

12 I'm struggling to understand why this is  
13 happening and how often these interruptions have  
14 occurred. Every missed school day effects their  
15 learning stability and routine, and I worry about the  
16 long term impact that this may have on my son's  
17 education. I am more than willing to work together  
18 to make sure my son stays on track academically and  
19 emotionally.

20 I have asked many times how I can support in  
21 addressing these issues but what I'm getting is, the  
22 youth are sleeping in classrooms and being separated  
23 from other youth by being kept in classrooms,  
24 therefore my son and others cannot go to school every  
25 day since the classroom space is being utilized as

1  
2 bedrooms for non-educational purposes. Also, when he  
3 is taken to school, sometimes it is only for half a  
4 day. Since there are too many youth that need to go  
5 to school, those days are being cut out or swept out.  
6 I respectfully request a clarification on why are  
7 there days when students are not sent to school.

8 Respectfully, can I continue? Thank you. What  
9 determines the classroom capacity and how often this  
10 prevents students from attending. That being said,  
11 today I would like to know what type of education  
12 support will be put in place moving forward.

13 What steps is the facility taking to ensure that  
14 every child behind these walls receive the proper  
15 education they deserve and what does education  
16 process look for these children on a daily basis?  
17 I'll end it here because it's pretty long.

18 As a parent, I am extremely concerned, how can we  
19 expect these children to grow into productive members  
20 of society if they are not given the consistent  
21 access to school? Uhm, respectfully request a  
22 detailed explanation of the facilities educational  
23 plan and how you will ensure that my son and all the  
24 other youth receive education that they are entitled  
25 to. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

SHARLENA CLOUGH: Good afternoon. My name is Sharlena Clough, I am a single mother who passionately advocates for my child because he is my world, my everything. I have an incredibly bright 15 year old who is passionate about change and photography and honestly, I can say that the educational system has failed my child not once but twice.

Since moving to New York from Maryland, I've become more frustrated with the lack of consistent policies, educational services, and programs for my child despite him being in a regular public school or detention facility setting, limited educational access has hindered the development of my child in addition to our vulnerable students.

When my child was a student at Passages, my child was not attending school and/or not arriving to school on time due to employee shortages. Whenever there was a situation at the facility with a juvenile, other students, including my child had to miss time from school because according to ACS, uh SCO excuse me rule, all students must travel to and from school together. My child was not given an

1  
2 opportunity to make up his school work due to no  
3 fault of his own. What's most alarming about my  
4 experience with Passages was when my child informed  
5 me a day later that he was not allowed to take the  
6 Regents Biology exam. I've consistently communicated  
7 with Passages and SCO staff and they both failed to  
8 mention to me that my child was at risk of not being  
9 able to sit for the exam, especially having two  
10 meetings, two week prior to June 10<sup>th</sup>'s Regents exam  
11 date. There was no action plan in place for my child  
12 and other students that have Passages to complete the  
13 required lab work prior to the exam nor after the  
14 exam was administered on June the 10<sup>th</sup>.

15 This would not have happened at a regular public  
16 school. As they almost got away with it, I was the  
17 first parent to address both Passages Academy SCO  
18 staff. There was no accountability, both parties  
19 blamed one another. The principal from Passages  
20 planned to rectify the situation was for my child to  
21 complete the missing lab work and present the work to  
22 a home school once my child transitions back into the  
23 community. And it would be up to the decision of my  
24 child's home school to accept the lab work in which  
25 it's totally unacceptable.

1  
2 This is a disadvantage for my child and other  
3 students, as they should not be penalized because of  
4 Passages failed providing the necessary supports to  
5 enable students to complete the lab work.

6 Since my child left Passages, the transition  
7 hasn't been easy. He continues to struggle with the  
8 routine of it all. Support services or his IEP have  
9 yet to be fully implemented as we were still waiting  
10 for an AT device in which we requested over a year  
11 ago and we have yet to get it and in addition to a  
12 math tutor. This delay has caused other - has caused  
13 my child to fall behind with even more class work as  
14 certain class requires extensive essay writing.  
15 Certainly, this problem has caused my child to  
16 disengage. Public Schools have standards that they  
17 are held to but this is not the case for Passages.  
18 Why is helping students not a priority? Is it  
19 because they are in detention centers? Our failed  
20 patch educational system does not anticipate  
21 juveniles to pursue higher education in high school.  
22 Why aren't there any goals for students that have  
23 Passages to strive for excellence? Why are our  
24 students voluntary contestants are double jeopardy  
25 and double punishment? Administrators do not realize

1  
2 that our prior systems have failed our students,  
3 which led them to become juveniles in the first  
4 place. Our students stay in trauma before ending up  
5 in the system. Passages overlooked addressing these  
6 issues by restricting a number of services provided  
7 to students who have learning, attention and  
8 emotional disabilities. Oh sorry.

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: It's okay. I typically cut  
10 people off but I'm going to let the parents rock  
11 because I understand that you're advocating for your  
12 kids, I'm going to give you the time that you need.

13 SHARLENA CLOUGH: Thank you very much. When it  
14 comes to our students transitioning back into a  
15 public school, they are shellshocked and completely  
16 lost once they get back to public school. Since  
17 Passages and public schools are too very different  
18 systems, and this cycle continues. This is not fair.  
19 This is a crisis. This is a problem and this must  
20 stop. And would you tolerate these intolerable  
21 conditions if it happened to your own child or  
22 children? Thank you.

23 DAREK ROBINSION: Good afternoon. My name is  
24 Darek Robinson, I'm the Vice President of Grievance  
25 Legal Services for the Social Service Employees Union

1  
2 Local 371. On behalf of President Anthony Wells,  
3 officers, and staff and our 20,000 members that we  
4 represent. We would like to thank the Chairs,  
5 Honorable Althea Stevens on the Committee on Child  
6 and Youth, as well as Honorable Rita Joseph on the  
7 Committee on Education for the opportunity to give  
8 this testimony.

9 SSEU Local 371 represents the youth development  
10 specialists title series, case workers, and program  
11 counselors as well as the Children's Center. I,  
12 myself served as a tour commander for ACS DYFJ for 24  
13 years. I would like to acknowledge our Youth  
14 Development Specialists and program counselors  
15 integral to the welfare and the rehabilitation of the  
16 youth in their custody.

17 They both provide not only supervision but also  
18 mentorship and guidance, fostering environment where  
19 growth and positive change are possible. Despite  
20 their tireless efforts, there are significant  
21 challenges that impede their mission to support these  
22 youth effectively.

23 Our facilities often face overcrowding, which  
24 complicates the ability to deliver personalized care  
25 and attention. This environment can hinder effective

counseling efforts to and concern at detention.

Incidents of youth on youth assaults as well as youth and staff assaults, are distressingly common such as situations not only endanger the wellbeing of everyone involved.

To address these issues, we propose - we explore a broader range of educational and vocational opportunities tailored to the interests and aptitudes of the residents in ACS DYFJ care. Implementing trade schools within the juvenile detention facilities can provide invaluable skills and open up career paths in fields such as mechanics, plumbing, carpentry and electrical work. These trades offer stable employment opportunities upon release and can significantly reduce incidents within both facilities.

In conclusion, I urge the Council to consider these recommendations to enhance our current system and establish a more comprehensive approach to youth development. Together we can foster a safer environment that prioritizes the wellbeing and future of our young individuals while supporting dedicated staff who work tirelessly to guide them on their journey.

1  
2 Thank you for your attention and for considering  
3 the crucial step towards improving the outcome of our  
4 youth development specialists and residents that  
5 reside at the juvenile detention. In solidarity,  
6 Darek Robinson Vice President of Grievance and Legal  
7 Services, Social Service Employers Union Local 371.

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. I do have a few  
9 questions to this panel and I'm sorry, I didn't catch  
10 your name. Yes.

11 BELKYS RIVERA: Belkys.

12 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Belkys, one, I just want to  
13 let you know - I know you said you had a number of  
14 questions. I will make sure that my staff gets in  
15 contact with you before you leave because I want to  
16 work with ACS so you can get the answers to those  
17 questions that you had. But uhm, so when we're done  
18 with this panel, I don't know if my staff is over  
19 there. Please connect with her. Thanks.

20 But I don't know who said, but someone said that  
21 uhm, that the students weren't allowed to go to  
22 school because they were at the maximum number of  
23 students. Did they explain what that meant? Because  
24 this is the first time I'm hearing that.  
25

BELKYS RIVERA: I'm actually still trying to find the answer to that. I don't understand why this happened.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And any of the other parents, have you guys experienced similar things with that as well?

BELKYS RIVERA: Yes, at Horizon's, the same thing as well.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And they - they just told you that? They were at the maximum number today, so he wasn't able to go.

BELKYS RIVERA: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Well, I know he was just here, so I'm going to asking a question when you leave because this is the first time I'm kind of hearing what that term is. I didn't hear that.

Alright, do you have any questions?

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And you also mentioned uhm, your child didn't go to school because the rest of the kids - his cohorts couldn't go to school that day as well, right? Someone mentioned that.

Yeah, go ahead. Tell me a little bit about that.

So, basically my child told me that uhm, there's been a lot of situations pertaining to other

1  
2 juveniles. Like being in any type of situation that  
3 happened at the facility and as a result, especially  
4 if it happened early in the morning, that the rest of  
5 the kids was penalized and couldn't go to school  
6 because of a situation that pertained to one child  
7 only and it's not right.

8 SHARLENA CLOUGH: And it's not right and as a  
9 result, the kids either arrive to school late, on  
10 time or they did not go to school at all and the kids  
11 was never given an opportunity for them to make up  
12 their classwork and that's due to no fault of their  
13 own.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay.

15 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I don't have any more  
16 questions for this panel. Oh, you had something to  
17 add?

18 DANASIA BOONE: Uhm, yes, I have a question for  
19 ACS, why is that we cannot as parents help support  
20 our children as in socks, clothing? Every time we go  
21 see them or if they go to court, they look a mess.  
22 The clothes are ripped up, the shoes are ripped up,  
23 the shoes are in terrible condition. It's always  
24 something, even when you go to visits. They look  
25 terrible. Why can't we help take care of our

1  
2 children? Because in other states, ACS; my aunt  
3 works for ACS and then the state. When it comes to  
4 the children in detention centers, the parents are  
5 allowed to bring certain clothing, not regular  
6 clothing but at least underwear, socks, T-shirts,  
7 sweatpants, something.

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: That is a great question  
9 and so, while they're here, we'll follow up after the  
10 hearing to see why that is something that hasn't been  
11 able to be done. So, that is a very good question  
12 and I see them taking notes and so, I'm sure they'll  
13 be able to answer that question for you.

14 BELKYS RIVERA: Uhm and as well, I actually asked  
15 them if I was able to donate books so they can read  
16 and educational books. These are books that I get  
17 because I also do activist work, so I get these books  
18 donated to my job and I wanted to bring them. When I  
19 called, they actually told me yeah, yeah, of course  
20 bring them. When I did, they turned me away and said  
21 that I had to mail them one by one, which was like  
22 very odd but I have them here, so you can check them  
23 and just you know pick the ones that you like for the  
24 kids. And it was just like very disappointing.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: That's something we will definitely address with New York City Public Schools because I know the superintendent earlier said they wanted to replenish their library. So, that is a conversation we'll also include in our letter to them.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, that's definitely a follow up question.

BELKYS RIVERA: Sorry, once again.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: No need to apologize. Listen, I usually cut people off but you guys are advocating for your kids, so there's no way that I'm going to not allow you to ask the questions that you want to ask. So, take the time and the questions that you want to ask, you can ask.

BELKYS RIVERA: Why is the library and the church closed for them? They don't have any access to the library or the church and I'm hearing - I heard about packets but my son has never told me anything about packages and what type of packages? Is it something that ACS is giving or is it something that the Department of Education has given for them to actually use because that was actually asked in court as well.

1  
2 And another thing, my son has special needs and  
3 he was out sleeping on the boat and he doesn't  
4 receive his medication on time, so it throws his body  
5 off. So, if he's getting his medication at 10:00,  
6 the medication doesn't kick in until 12:00. So, now  
7 he's struggling to wake up and now he's sleeping out  
8 on a boat, which is dangerous because you don't know  
9 what child decides to have a behavior to stab  
10 somebody, slash somebody, attack somebody. My child  
11 is going to be lethargic and out of it. So, I had  
12 requested for them to put him back in a room  
13 considering he's been there since March 7<sup>th</sup>. So, it  
14 took a little while but they got him in a room.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, you have a time release  
16 medication and they know about it?

17 BELKYS RIVERA: Medications yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, 504's are allowed in the  
19 facilities, right? Yes ACS? 504's, that means  
20 medication you did administer to a child? Okay, she  
21 has a timely released medicine that must be provided  
22 to her child on a timely manner.

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay, well, we'll follow up  
24 and these are questions that I'm sure my staff is  
25 taking in. We'll follow up and we'll make sure we

1  
2 get your contact information as we're working with  
3 ACS to get the answer to those questions but before  
4 you guys leave, I know someone said that when your  
5 child had said that the facility hadn't been cleaned,  
6 I actually just got a text message that someone said  
7 that there's only about two housekeeping staff as of  
8 yesterday at Horizon, so that might be a reason why.

9 BELKYS RIVERA: Yeah, about two weeks ago, my son  
10 had ringworm and ringworm is contagious and I'm like,  
11 "well if you all are not going outside and wearing  
12 the same clothes, what's going on?"

13 He called me and let me know uhm, medical didn't  
14 even call me and let me know. So, I told him not to  
15 touch your face, not to touch your hair because it's  
16 going to spread through your body and he asked me not  
17 to come on a visit, and I was like, "so, what's going  
18 on? How is the facility being cleaned?" If we have  
19 children that have special needs, we have children  
20 that have sensitive skin. My son has Von Willebrand  
21 disease, which mean if he gets cut or injured or  
22 break anything, he would have to get a platelet or a  
23 blood transfusion. His body does not heal within  
24 seconds. He takes minutes to heal, so this is -  
25

1  
2 every time something happens, this is what I have to  
3 break down to them.

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, uhm like I said  
5 someone just let me know about the facility and not  
6 having enough cleaning staff, so that is something I  
7 will follow up with ACS as well. So, thank you guys  
8 for coming in. I appreciate you continue to fight and  
9 advocate for your kids. Please use this as a  
10 resource and if there's questions and things that are  
11 coming up, please don't let this be the last time.  
12 We want to be of support, myself and Council Member  
13 Joseph. And again, thank you for fighting for your  
14 kids because we're fighting along with you.  
15 Appreciate you, thank you.

16 PANEL: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I'll be calling the next  
18 panel. Uhm, Lorraine Bridges, Mary Merkel, Dr.  
19 Jackie Cody, Alexandra Rapisarda, Melissa Accomando.  
20 Tell him I said hello.

21 LORRAINE GITTENS-BRIDGES: Good afternoon my name  
22 is Lorraine Gittens-Bridges. I am one of the  
23 codevelopers of the citywide leadership team bills.  
24 I am also a former Co-Chairperson for the  
25 Chancellor's Parent Advisory Council and a core

1  
2 member of school leadership teams and district  
3 leadership teams for New York City and I am a proud  
4 New York City public school graduate. And last but  
5 not least, I am the chartering president of two units  
6 of New York State and national PTA.

7 Thank you Council Member Joseph and Council  
8 Member Stevens and the Education Committee and the  
9 Committee for Youth and Children for supporting the  
10 Resolutions 1017, 1018, 1019 urgent New York State  
11 legislatures to pass the citywide leadership team  
12 bills. The citywide leadership team is the missing  
13 link. As you know, we are the largest school  
14 district in the country. Unfortunately, many of our  
15 PTA's and school leadership teams are not functioning  
16 effectively across our large system. So, we don't  
17 know exactly a lot of times how to support them and  
18 as being a former Chairperson I know where to go to  
19 ask you know to find out what schools need. But you  
20 can't find out what they need if they're not  
21 functioning.

22 The CLT is not a top down approach. It is a  
23 bottom up approach. We have the accountability  
24 measures that will help us support our schools in  
25 real time. Not ten years down the road. The concept

1  
2 of the citywide leadership team, which is called the  
3 school committee, has been sitting in the A655 since  
4 2010. Our students cannot continue to wait. Thank  
5 you for joining us and urgent our New York State  
6 legislators to make the citywide leadership team  
7 bills. New York State Education law just like the  
8 school and district leadership teams. Thank you  
9 again for your support.

10 MARY MERKEL: Good afternoon. My name is Mary  
11 Merkel and I am a staff attorney with the Education  
12 Defense Project at the Bronx Defenders. A holistic  
13 defense organization serving the Bronx. At the Bronx  
14 Defenders, we believe that all children should be  
15 free. There should be zero children in Horizons or  
16 Crossroads. However, until all children in this city  
17 are free, the very bare minimum they should receive  
18 is access to consistent quality and intentionally  
19 uplifting education.

20 Our young people are told at every turn that  
21 education is the way to better their lives. We  
22 cannot abandon this idea when it comes to the young  
23 people who arguably need consistent quality and  
24 intentional education the most. Those whose lives  
25 have intersected with the criminal legal system. Our

1  
2 clients who are detained want to be in school but are  
3 not able to regularly attend. Access needs to be  
4 more consistent. A student cannot learn if they  
5 aren't given actual instructional time in a  
6 classroom. Our recommendations are: Stop utilizing  
7 classrooms for housing students to ensure there is  
8 enough classroom space for students to learn in.

9 Children sleeping on cots in classrooms is  
10 unacceptable. Intentionally hire bilingual teachers  
11 and staff to ensure students that speak Spanish are  
12 not deprived of an education while detained because  
13 of a lack of staffing. Ensure SEP's are made timely  
14 with input from students and their parents. Fulfill  
15 their responsibilities under Child Find. Conduct new  
16 psycho educational assessments in a timely manner, as  
17 well as other necessary evaluations and update  
18 students IEP's and SEP's. Increase access to engage  
19 in college courses. Increase access to vocational  
20 skill building and certifications.

21 Unfortunately, once these young people are  
22 released from a detention facility, access to  
23 education continues to be a challenge. Many students  
24 face discrimination based on their involvement in the  
25 criminal legal system. Students are sometimes asked

1  
2 in transfer school interviews about their criminal  
3 cases and the denied entry to high schools with  
4 specialized programs designed for them.

5       These persistent barriers severely limit the  
6 resources and opportunities available for young  
7 people we serve. Our recommendations for young  
8 people who have been released from juvenile detention  
9 facilities are: NYCPS must develop an approach to  
10 assisting young people who transition out of juvenile  
11 facilities and ensuring support by reimagining the  
12 role of transition counselor. This counselor needs  
13 to have the authority to issue enrollment letters,  
14 grant safety transfers and to place students in  
15 transfer high schools. NYCPS must develop a virtual  
16 transition school connected to Passages Academy so  
17 students can continue to stay engaged in school daily  
18 until to new placement is secured. Sometimes the  
19 transfer school application process can take months  
20 and students lose crucial momentum.

21       For students who have been studying for their GED  
22 with an online program, they should be given a  
23 computer and support to complete their GED studies.  
24 NYCPS in conjunction with transfer high schools must  
25 create additional openings and guaranteed seats at

1  
2 transfer high schools and specialized programs such  
3 as Restart for middle and high school students  
4 transitioning out of juvenile facilities.

5 These young people deserve to be free and they  
6 deserve our resources and our support. Thank you.

7 ALEXANDRA RAPISARDA: Good afternoon. My name is  
8 Alexandra Rapisarda and I am a Senior Staff Attorney  
9 with the Center for Family Representations Youth  
10 Defense Practice. Thank you Chair Stevens and Chair  
11 Joseph and the Committees on Children and Youth and  
12 Education for giving us the opportunity to testify  
13 today.

14 CFR is the countywide assigned indigent defense  
15 provider for parents who are facing ACS prosecutions  
16 in lower Manhattan, Queens and Staten Island and is a  
17 conflict provider in the Bronx. In 2019, CFR also  
18 expanded its work to represent young people accused  
19 of crimes in family court. Our goals are always to  
20 prevent children from entering the foster system or  
21 youth incarceration systems. Shorten the time that  
22 families are separated and help families stabilize  
23 when reunited. My experience as an educational  
24 attorney and youth defender is in stark contrast to  
25 the testimony that the Committees heard earlier

1  
2 today. Students who are incarcerated deserve the  
3 same or more protections and opportunities than their  
4 non-incarcerated peers. Right now, the fact that  
5 they are incarcerated is a main determining factor in  
6 how much education a child is getting. If any, let  
7 alone their special education services.

8 Education, children being connected to their  
9 communities and their schools, is a main factor in  
10 their success. New York City's inability to provide  
11 access to meaningful education to incarcerated young  
12 people is actively harming them. An essential piece  
13 of educational success is parent and family  
14 involvement. When students are incarcerated,  
15 families are cut off from participating in a students  
16 education the same way that they could in a  
17 community. Parents often do not receive updates from  
18 Passages and have little to no information about  
19 special education services and progress of their  
20 children. This fall parents across the city  
21 participated in things like parent teacher  
22 conferences for their students but not parents of  
23 incarcerated students. Our clients parents  
24 consistently report receiving no information  
25 regarding their child's schooling and at a minimum,

1  
2 these types of instrumental conferences are doable  
3 while students are incarcerated and better prepare  
4 families when students return to the community.

5 In closing, when we know that incarceration harms  
6 young people, disrupts their educational progress and  
7 deprives them of special education support, and sends  
8 them unsupported back to their communities. City  
9 Council must think critically about whether  
10 incarcerating young people is ever an appropriate  
11 response.

12 At a time when the Raise the Age legislation is  
13 under attack, we should critically exam how our  
14 city's failure to provide appropriate education  
15 carceral settings plays a role in the critiques of  
16 this law.

17 DR. JACKIE CODY: Good afternoon and thank you  
18 Council woman Stevens and the Education Committee  
19 under the leadership of Council woman Rita Joseph for  
20 Resolutions 1017, 1018, 1019, urging New York State  
21 legislators to pass the New York City citywide  
22 leadership team bills. My name is Dr. Jackie Cody;  
23 I'm an educator and loving parent and other titles  
24 I'm not going to list right now for the sake of time.  
25 Briefly, along with protecting democracy, here are

1  
2 some other top reasons why the citywide leadership  
3 team, the CLT is necessary.

4 The CLT provides a model and support for school  
5 leadership teams. Because of a well-functioning  
6 school leadership team, the school my daughter  
7 graduated from in 2023 had 100 percent graduation  
8 rate. Give applause.

9 There are 1,800 plus schools to be accountable  
10 and transparent and since funds go directly from  
11 central to schools, it is imperative to have direct  
12 insight to provide necessary support to school  
13 leadership teams that need it. The Chancellor  
14 visiting every SLT every year is impractical and  
15 highly improbable.

16 Furthermore, excuse me, according to New York  
17 State Education Departments recommendations from  
18 their April 9, 2024, report on Mayoral control, New  
19 York City stakeholders are calling for the CLT,  
20 citywide engagement, shared decision making,  
21 accountability and transparency.

22 The school principal has a team, the district  
23 superintendent has a team, why wouldn't the  
24 Chancellor have a team that includes representation  
25 of all New York City stakeholders, educators, unions,

1  
2 elected officials, CBO's and most importantly,  
3 parents and students. Parent and student engagement  
4 is a must for school success. Studies have shown  
5 that parent and student involvement and shared  
6 decision making, enhances academic achievement,  
7 provides a comprehensive support system, promotes  
8 accountability, develops valuable skills, improves  
9 student behavior and wellbeing, empower students  
10 increases students engagement in their own education  
11 and provides unique insights that working in silos  
12 cannot fathom. Every student deserves direct access  
13 to high quality educational opportunities and  
14 programs to reach their own full potential of  
15 success. Thank you.

16 MELISSA ACCOMANDO: My name is Melissa Accomando  
17 and I am an Education Attorney at Neighborhood  
18 Defender Service of Harlem. I am grateful for the  
19 opportunity to participate in today's hearing.

20 I work closely with my colleagues in the criminal  
21 defense practice to advocate for the educational  
22 needs of our adolescent clients, including those in  
23 secure detention.

24 NDS clients who are enrolled in Passages  
25 consistently report similar negative experiences at

1  
2 both facilities. Many students are not taken to  
3 class or taken to class late; others have told us  
4 that they are given packets of work to do on their  
5 own in their cells. The facilities are often so  
6 overcrowded that classrooms are used as overflow  
7 housing units. Last month, one client reported that  
8 he had not attended school at all since being  
9 detained at Crossroads for three weeks. Upon  
10 reaching out to DOE staff, NDS learned that his hall  
11 at Crossroads had not been taken to school due to  
12 unspecified facility issues.

13 We are concerned that many students who do not  
14 have access to an education advocate are being  
15 deprived of an education without any recourse. ACS  
16 and DOE need to ensure that all students are taken to  
17 school on a daily basis.

18 Access to programming also impacts students over  
19 the summer. Last summer, a client did not have the  
20 opportunity to earn credits or participate in summer  
21 youth employment due to ACS staffing issues. As a  
22 result, Passages made the regrettable decision to  
23 suspend summer school elective courses. ACS must  
24 address these staffing concerns to ensure students  
25 are brought to school consistently. The city must

1  
2 also address the overcrowding in these facilities so  
3 that classrooms can be used for their intended  
4 purpose for students to learn and participate in the  
5 required number of school hours that they are  
6 entitled to.

7 Both agencies have the obligation to engage  
8 students enrolled in Passages Academy and to provide  
9 them with the opportunity to make educational  
10 progress.

11 NDS is grateful to the Committees for hosting  
12 this hearing and working to address these important  
13 issues. Youth in detention deserve quality access to  
14 education. I have included additional details in my  
15 submitted written testimony regarding the DOE's  
16 failure to provide legally mandated special education  
17 services. There also need to be improved efforts to  
18 support transition planning when young people return  
19 to their school communities. Thank you for your time  
20 and consideration of our comments.

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. We don't have  
22 any - do you have questions? We don't have any  
23 questions for the panel. Thank you. Rohini Singh  
24 and Anna - is that a G? Oh Anna Gallagher.  
25

1  
2 ROHINI SINGH: Good afternoon. Thank you for the  
3 opportunity Chairs Joseph and Stevens to testify  
4 today. My name is Rohini Singh and I'm the Director  
5 of the School Justice Project at Advocates for  
6 Children of New York.

7 Each year, we help thousands of families navigate  
8 the education system and our work includes supporting  
9 court involved youth in overcoming the significant  
10 challenges of accessing educational and special  
11 educational services both while they're in placement  
12 and as they transition back to their communities.

13 Young people in juvenile detention placement and  
14 adult jails need intensive targeted educational  
15 services and therapeutic interventions. This  
16 morning, AFC released a report reconnecting to  
17 opportunity, advancing educational equity for court  
18 involved students, which offers an analysis of data  
19 from Local Law 21, passed by this Council in 2023.  
20 The data in our experience demonstrate that there is  
21 significant work to be done to address the needs of  
22 court involved youth.

23 Some key takeaways from our analysis of the data,  
24 include that youth in juvenile detention or placement  
25 in 2023 and 2024 and 2024 and 2025 school years were

almost twice as likely as their peers to have learning disabilities and more than 17 times as likely to be labeled as students with emotional disabilities.

In addition, over half of students who transferred to a New York City Public School or program after being discharged from detention or placement, missed more days of school than they intended after transitioning back to the community.

Our report calls on the city to take several critical steps to better support these students before they enter detention and placement, while enrolled in Passages and as they return to their school communities.

First, we urge the city to provide students with critical services in their school communities to help them succeed in school. Some of these services include ensuring every school has a school based mental health clinic or partnership with a community based mental provider. Hiring at least one behavioral specialist per district. Creating more therapeutic school options and specialized programming within New York City Public Schools for young people with behavioral and emotional challenges

1  
2 and ensuring that all middle and high school students  
3 struggling with reading, receive intensive  
4 intervention.

5 Second, advocates have raised the alarm regarding  
6 the conditions in secure detention facilities and the  
7 numerous barriers for students to actually attend  
8 school in these facilities. The city must ensure  
9 that the students are able to regularly attend and  
10 are receiving their special education services and  
11 ENL services.

12 Finally, the city must improve the transition  
13 process for students coming out of detention or  
14 placement to ensure that students can access  
15 appropriate educational programs and support the  
16 reengagement in school.

17 We hear from many families that receive no  
18 support when they are leaving Passages and have no  
19 communication with Passages staff after they're  
20 discharged. A full report is available on our  
21 website. Thank you for the opportunity to testify  
22 and thank you for highlighting this important topic.

23 ANNA ARKIN-GALLAGHER: Hi, good afternoon. Thank  
24 you to Chairs Joseph and Stevens for the opportunity  
25 to testify today. My name is Anna Arkin-Gallagher,

1  
2 I'm the Associate Director of the Civil Justice  
3 Practice at Brooklyn Defenders. Our education unit  
4 provides legal representation and informal advocacy  
5 to our school age clients and parents of children in  
6 New York City schools. A number of our clients are  
7 or have been incarcerated in juvenile detention  
8 facilities.

9 We believe that children learn best when they're  
10 in their homes and not behind bars. The best way to  
11 provide educational supports to the young people we  
12 serve is to avoid putting them in detention and focus  
13 on diverting them from the criminal legal system  
14 altogether. For young people who are in detention,  
15 however, we believe the city must do more to improve  
16 the educational services they receive. Students who  
17 attend Passages have long struggled to access high  
18 quality educational services and especially recently  
19 have sometimes been unable to access educational  
20 services at all.

21 In contrast to some of what we heard earlier, at  
22 least one young person in our office is working with  
23 at Crossroads reports he hasn't been to school since  
24 the start of the current school year. Another  
25 student reports he's frequently been receiving

worksheets in place of live instruction. A young person at Horizon told us that his access to school has been inconsistent at best. In late October, he told us he had been to school by his estimation five or six times.

We thank the Council for passing Local Law 21 of 2024, which requires New York City Public Schools to report data that further sheds light on the issues with education in juvenile detention facilities. The recently released data indicates that students missed a huge number of school days last school year. ACS and New York City Public Schools must work together to ensure young people are able to attend school every day as required by law. And the missed instructional time is particularly alarming considering the significant academic remediation and supports many students at passages require. Despite the need for special education services, we've heard that SEP's are delayed for a significant number of students that fewer than five students enrolled at Passages last year received their mandated triannual evaluations or their annual IEP reviews and we've heard again today about transition services and we also see that there's often a substantial delay in

1  
2 getting students back into school and that  
3 connections with schools that might be appropriate  
4 for these students like transfer schools often come  
5 as just a recommendation to enroll in a transfer  
6 school, rather than targeted support in doing that -  
7 in getting enrolled. So, our written testimony will  
8 further elaborate on many suggestions for improved  
9 educational services. Thank you for the opportunity  
10 to testify today.

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony.  
13 If we missed anyone who would like to testify in  
14 person, please visit the Sergeants table and complete  
15 a witness slip now. We will be moving to Zoom  
16 testimony. Once your name is called, a member of our  
17 staff will unmute you and the Sergeant at Arms will  
18 set the timer and give you the go ahead to begin.  
19 Adriel Louis (SP?).

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Ochoa Tizer (SP?).

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Katie, right? Come on up.  
24 Katelyn sorry. You may begin whenever you're ready.  
25

1  
2 KATELYN GRECO: Hello, my name is Katelyn Greco,  
3 I'm Director of Prevention Juvenile Justice and  
4 Equity at COFCCA or the Council of Family and Child  
5 Caring Agencies. We are the principal representative  
6 for nearly all nonprofits across the state who  
7 provide welfare and juvenile justice services  
8 including the five agencies that are contracted by  
9 ACS to provide Close to Home programming.

10 I also really greatly appreciate the opportunity  
11 to add Close to Home programming to this conversation  
12 as young people residing in Close to Home are also  
13 receiving their education through Passages.  
14 Providers have reported to us various barriers that  
15 have been impacting quality of education for young  
16 people in Close to Home. For instance, providers  
17 have reported that young people who are on GED track  
18 have been put in classrooms on a self-paced computer  
19 program where the rest of the class is receiving  
20 instructor led programming by the teachers. That's  
21 obviously very disruptive. It's also not going to  
22 help engagement for young people who are probably  
23 disengaged for years prior to Close to Home to school  
24 right?  
25

Also, young people are looking for vocational opportunities to increase their skills so they're ready for the workforce when they leave Close to Home. So, we have four recommendations that I wanted to raise today. One is that we provide GED instructors for all GED tracked students to incorporate vocational programming into the school day. GED tracked students are required to be in a seat for three and a half hours compared to high school and middle school tracked students who are required to be for five and a half hours. Those two extra hours could be utilized for vocational programming for the GED students.

Three, invest in career opportunities or career exposure opportunities for students. Providing different career exposure opportunities can increase school engagement in hope for the future.

Four, expand partnerships with community based organizations to enhance access to learning opportunities. Expanding investments and partnerships with community based organizations will allow young people to access different learning opportunities in the communities they reside. It

1  
2 will also increase their support network once they  
3 transition back home to the community.

4 And I'll also submit written testimony that  
5 further details everything.

6 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Uhm, I do have a question  
7 for you just because I realized I didn't even ask  
8 this to ACS. But so, does the folks who are in Close  
9 to Homes, do they have access to the vocational  
10 training? You're just saying that it's not during  
11 the educational time and that's why you're requesting  
12 that that become an option?

13 KATELYN GRECO: Correct. So, right now, it's  
14 really on the providers to create those partnerships,  
15 which they do but it's really - the GED tracked  
16 students are having a hard time wanting to you know  
17 participate in the GED program.

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And they're usually in the  
19 same classroom?

20 KATELYN GRECO: That's what providers have  
21 reported to me that there has been times where the  
22 GED student is with another class, like a high school  
23 or a middle school class who are receiving a teacher  
24 you know led instructor.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And so, it's like often with the lab top and do the work and then there's an instructor.

KATELYN GRECO: Correct.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: That seems distracting.

KATELYN GRECO: Exactly and also not going to increase engagement for a kid that's probably already disengaged.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Right, right okay. That's very helpful. Uhm do you have any questions? Thank you so much.

KATELYN GRECO: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I'm sorry we missed you; we didn't have your slip here.

KATELYN GRECO: That's okay, thank you for letting me testify.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Did you submit your recommendations to us? Okay, thank you so much.

Well, this concludes our hearing on today on Juvenile in Education Detention Centers but I just want to make sure that we say more openly that we need to be thinking about preventative services so that our young people are not ending up in detention and not having the crisis of being in overcrowded

spaces but we appreciate the work of both ACS and DOE because it is not an easy job and tasks that you're being handed to. But again, this is always about making sure that our kids have access and access to the highest standards that they deserve. So, thank you all for being here today and with that, I conclude this hearing. [GAVEL]

C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date December 12, 2025