

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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B E F O R E:  
DANIEL DROMM  
Chairperson

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Chaim M. Deutsch  
Mark Levine  
Alan N. Maisel  
Antonio Reynoso  
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## A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Tracy Weber-Thomas  
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Anthony Vargas  
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Deesha Narichania  
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## A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

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Senior Staff Attorney  
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Julienne Verdi  
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## A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Sarah Fajardo

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Coalition for Asian American Children and  
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Sharene Roig

Coordinator of Women and Girls Programs  
CONNECT

Michele Paolella, LMSW

Program Director

Day One

[gavel]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: 'Kay, good afternoon.

My name is Daniel Dromm and I'm the Chair of the Education Committee. Before I start I wanna say thank you, because oftentimes I forget, but I do wanna say thank you to my staff who's really worked hard to prepare for this hearing, especially Joan Povolny, my Policy Analyst. Joan, thank you very much. Where are you Joan? [background comment] Very good. Thank you, Joan. Also, Aysha Schomburg, my Counsel, thank you; Jan Atwell, Policy Analyst; Madina Nizamitdin, Finance Analyst, and Norah Yahya, my Finance Analyst as well.

So good afternoon. Today the Committee will hear testimony on five resolutions, all of which are meant to address bullying, harassment and intimate partner violence among school-age children.

I'd like to thank the sponsors of these resolutions, Council Members Ignizio, Weprin, Levine and Wills, along with the members of the Education Committee, for their work and for joining me here today. I'd also like to thank all here for coming and taking the time to address this important issue.

1  
2           Bullying, harassment and intimate partner  
3 violence all stem from the same thing; someone is  
4 trying to exert power and control or trying to  
5 humiliate another person. Sadly, these behaviors are  
6 all too common, as anecdotal evidence and statistics  
7 have repeatedly shown. Bullying can occur in school  
8 or after school and now often takes place  
9 electronically, which is known as cyberbullying.

10           A survey by the United States Department  
11 of Education and Justice found that in 2011 about 28  
12 percent of students between the ages of 12 and 18  
13 reported being bullied at school during the school  
14 year. Additionally, according to the United States  
15 Census for Disease Control and Prevention, an  
16 estimated 16 percent of high school students reported  
17 in 2011 that they were bullied electronically in the  
18 12 months before the survey. Lesbian, gay, bisexual,  
19 transgender and questioning youth are at high risk  
20 for being bullied. According to the 2013 School  
21 Climate Survey administered annually by the Gay,  
22 Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), 74.1  
23 percent of LGBT students who responded to the survey  
24 were verbally harassed in the past year because of  
25 their sexual orientation and 55.2 percent because of

1  
2 their gender expression and 36.2 percent report being  
3 physically assaulted because of their sexual  
4 orientation, physically assaulted.

5 Domestic violence or dating violence  
6 among youth is equally troubling. Dating violence is  
7 abusive, controlling, aggressive behavior in a  
8 romantic relationship and can happen in straight or  
9 gay relationships. Dating violence can include  
10 verbal, emotional, physical or sexual abuse alone or  
11 in combination.

12 In 2011, New York City High School Youth  
13 Risk Behavior Survey noted that in New York City 10.4  
14 percent of male and female high school students  
15 reported being hit, slapped or physically hurt on  
16 purpose by a boyfriend/girlfriend within the past  
17 year.

18 The numbers and stories can go on and on  
19 and all point to the sad fact that many of our youth  
20 are being abused by other youth. These behaviors can  
21 have horrible consequences for the victim who is at  
22 risk to experience symptoms of depression and anxiety  
23 as well as engage in unhealthy behaviors, such as  
24 using drugs and alcohol. Without interventions, many  
25

1  
2 will repeat cycles of these behaviors throughout  
3 their lives.

4           While today's hearing focuses on certain  
5 resolutions that call for specific actions, we expect  
6 to hear from those in the front lines who can inform  
7 us as to how we as a city can better address some of  
8 these issues.

9           Thank you again for coming and now I'd  
10 like to turn the floor over to my colleagues; I'm  
11 going to ask Council Member Ruben Wills to speak  
12 first, followed by Council Member Weprin.

13           COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Thank you,  
14 Chairman Dromm. I would like to thank Chairman Dromm  
15 and the members of this Committee for calling this  
16 hearing to consider these resolutions. I would like  
17 to also thank my fellow Council Members Maria del  
18 Carmen Arroyo, Laurie Cumbo, Vanessa Gibson, Carlos  
19 Menchaca and Helen Rosenthal for their co-  
20 sponsorships. Lastly, although they could not attend  
21 this hearing, I wanna thank Drs. Heather McCauley and  
22 Elizabeth Miller of the Children's Hospital of  
23 Pittsburgh for their statement of support, as well as  
24 Mr. Brian O'Connor of the nonprofit advocacy  
25



1  
2 organization Futures Without Violence, who you will  
3 hear from shortly.

4           As many of my colleagues in this room  
5 know, there are times when a crisis arises and it  
6 awakens our sense to a great danger. Once we are  
7 alerted of that danger we seek legislative remedies  
8 to cure what is ill. The particular ill I wish to  
9 speak of today is intimate partner abuse. In 2011,  
10 the CDC reported more than 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4  
11 men in the U.S. had been sexually assaulted,  
12 physically abused and in some cases stalked by an  
13 intimate partner in their lifetime; most of them  
14 first experience these forms of abuse before reaching  
15 the age of 25; 22.4 percent of women and 15 percent  
16 of men first experience them between 11 and 17 years  
17 of age. In New York City, both boys and girls suffer  
18 from intimate partner abuse at the same rate, but  
19 boys are far less likely to report being abused  
20 because of the perceived stigma victimization  
21 carries, thus resulting in them being unable to  
22 receive the services they require. Intimate partner  
23 abuse also occurs in the LGBTQ community  
24 relationships at virtually the same rate as it does  
25 between heterosexual couples, but such incidents may

1  
2 be under-reported because of the unique pressures  
3 members of the LGBTQ community routinely encounter.  
4 Although awareness and prevention programs to combat  
5 intimate partner abuse are often within our city  
6 school system, they only exist in a limited number of  
7 schools; only one in my district and no such programs  
8 currently exist in our public school athletic league.

9           It's hardly a stretch of the imagination  
10 to figure the same permission culture existing in  
11 professional sports leagues that have long tolerated  
12 abusive attitudes and conduct towards women can be  
13 found among our middle school or high school  
14 athletes. As you will hear today, recent studies  
15 reflect not only the existence of such behavior in  
16 these settings, but that the implementation of  
17 awareness and prevention programs, like Coaching Boys  
18 into Men, young athletes can be molded into peer  
19 leaders who speak out against intimate partner abuse  
20 and promote healthy attitudes about dating and  
21 relationships. Intimate partner abuse must be driven  
22 out of every setting where our young men and women  
23 congregate, but a gap currently exists in our efforts  
24 to combat it and that gap lies in the arena of  
25 athletic competition.

1  
2 Resolutions 0455 and 0456 propose to  
3 eliminate this gap by calling on our city's Education  
4 Department to establish intimate partner abuse  
5 awareness and prevention programs in PSAL and our  
6 state legislators to direct the state's education  
7 authority to institute similar programs in all of the  
8 middle and high schools' athletic leagues.

9 I ask you for your support and again I  
10 thank Chairman Dromm.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Council  
12 Member Wills. Now we'll hear from Council Member  
13 Weprin, followed by Council Member Levine.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Thank you, Mr.  
15 Chair.

16 Ladies and gentleman, I'm the sponsor of  
17 a resolution that calls on the New York City  
18 Department of Education to require that all public  
19 school students receive age-differentiated anti-  
20 bullying instruction and complete an anti-bullying  
21 course of some type focused especially on  
22 cyberbullying.

23 I'm the parent of two teenagers; I have a  
24 6-year-old daughter as well and maybe it's the  
25 empathy of a parent that I bring to the table, but

1  
2 you know bullying is a major problem going on in our  
3 society today; it's really an epidemic. I often have  
4 people say to me who are older and say well we had  
5 bullying when I was a kid too and no question we did;  
6 we had bullying when I was a kid also, but the  
7 difference is, is that when we had bullying when I  
8 was in... I can remember in middle school or in grade  
9 school, it was usually done in a face to face manner  
10 in the playground or somewhere around the school and  
11 a lot of things could happen to help stop that  
12 bullying -- the principal might walk by, a teacher  
13 might come by, one of the kid's friends may come and  
14 defend him or her; the kid might decide to punch you  
15 in the nose, or even the bully could look into the  
16 eyes of the victim and realize, oops, I think I went  
17 too far. Those are a lot of factors that can change  
18 things.

19 But as we all know now, the bullying has  
20 changed today and when a child is bullied today it  
21 does not stop at the classrooms or the playgrounds,  
22 it continues through the internet, mobile devices and  
23 other electronic devices. Bullies now follow you to  
24 your home, they follow you to your bedroom; they're  
25 into your house and into your head. It is a

1 completely different animal and there is no way for  
2 people to sense just how far they've gone; you don't  
3 get to exactly know when the line is crossed and this  
4 is facilitated in an environment which students are  
5 often forced to deal with bullying around the clock  
6 in a way that we just never imagined when I was a  
7 kid. And the horror of knowing that conversations  
8 that you thought were private have become public  
9 would be frightening for anybody in this room. I've  
10 heard some of the things Danny Dromm says about me  
11 behind my back -- no -- [laughter] we don't want...  
12 private conversations are meant to be private and  
13 what happens is, these things become public and this  
14 is horrible for us even as adults up here; can you  
15 imagine being a teenager who's going through so many  
16 things in life and what happens to these students as  
17 they try to, you know make it through their lives; I  
18 mean, I tell my kids all the time about what to worry  
19 about and what not; it doesn't always work, and  
20 unfortunately these developments lead to disastrous  
21 consequences; you know a little more than a year ago  
22 a child in my son's school actually; it was a 12-  
23 year-old girl; she nearly lost her life; she  
24 attempted suicide and was luckily not successful and  
25

1  
2 later got counseling and has been doing much better  
3 now, but tragically, one of her best friends,  
4 Gabrielle Molina, was not so lucky and Gabrielle took  
5 her own life 18 months ago after facing severe and  
6 persistent bullying, including cyberbullying, and she  
7 ended her own life enduring constant bullying, school  
8 and online, and a humiliation by her peers. This is  
9 such a common occurrence today that it really is  
10 frightening.

11           So we must bring our school communities  
12 together to implement policies; this is a very  
13 serious problem that needs to be addressed by the  
14 DOE. I had problems with the old administration  
15 getting them to go beyond the Respect for All Week --  
16 oh, we have Respect for All Week, which is great, but  
17 this is something so serious; people to through  
18 ethics training, people go through sexual harassment  
19 training; these kids need to go through bullying  
20 training, because they need to know not only the  
21 effects it has on the victims, but just the effects  
22 it has on them, their friends and there needs to be  
23 consequences; we need to educate students and we  
24 can't just have it passed as some day in the  
25 auditorium; we need these kids to really know what's

1  
2 going on and to understand the consequences. So  
3 that's why I put this resolution in; it obviously is  
4 an issue that is emotional for me, near and dear to  
5 me because it came so close to my kids and I see what  
6 happens in teenagers' lives. And not to go on too  
7 long, but this is an issue that needs to be addressed  
8 and I've had conversations with the new Chancellor  
9 and she has sounded like she understands it and she  
10 wants to follow up on this, so I'm hopeful we could  
11 pass this resolution and continue to work with the  
12 DOE to make sure these kids get mandatory training  
13 and mandatory knowledge of what the consequences of  
14 that bullying is. So thank you, Mr. Chairman; I  
15 appreciate the indulgence.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Council  
17 Member Weprin and if anything I ever said behind your  
18 back was... anything at all is always good, so you can  
19 be assured of that... [crosstalk]

20 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I admire you and the  
22 work that you do.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Thank you, Mr.  
24 Chair.

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1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Council Member  
3 Levine.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Thank you  
5 Chairman Dromm, thank you for bringing us together on  
6 this important issue.

7 My colleagues have laid out so powerfully  
8 the case for why we're here today and why this matter  
9 deserves the attention of the Committee, and I won't  
10 repeat that, but I will point out that young people  
11 are not only victims of bullying; they are  
12 potentially part of the solution to this crisis, and  
13 that's the spirit behind my introduction here, Reso  
14 0355, which itself was championed and led by a young  
15 person, a young man who's a 12th grader now, Anthony  
16 Vargas, who I'm proud to say lives in my district,  
17 who himself was a victim of bullying in middle  
18 school, so serious that he had to change schools for  
19 safety reasons. He was lucky to end up at a school  
20 Uptown, Washington Heights Expeditionary Leadership  
21 Academy, known as WHEELS, whose principal, Brett  
22 Kimmel is here with us today, that has a program of  
23 peer mentoring in which older students mentor younger  
24 students, with the goal of both helping younger  
25 students who might potentially be victims of



1 bullying, but perhaps just as importantly, helping  
2 younger students who might potentially be bullies  
3 avoid such behavior. And Anthony is actually here  
4 with us today; I'd like to pause and ask him to stand  
5 up and maybe we'll give him a big round of applause  
6 for... [applause] for his bravery in speaking out on  
7 this and his leadership in realizing there's a model  
8 that needs to be replicated citywide. And actually,  
9 the stats on the impact of peer to peer mentoring are  
10 pretty significant -- if you give me one moment --  
11 sorry, I'm not as prepared as Anthony, that's for  
12 sure. Okay. Sorry, give me one moment; this is  
13 worth the delay folks, trust me. Okay. Alright,  
14 here we are. So data collected by Big Brother Big  
15 Sister shows that 46 percent of students who get  
16 mentored are less likely to begin using drugs, 27  
17 percent are less likely to begin using alcohol, 52  
18 percent are less likely to skip school, 37 percent  
19 are less likely to skip a class; 33 percent are less  
20 likely to hit someone. So those are pretty powerful  
21 testaments to the impact of mentoring. But it turns  
22 out we're providing no mentoring on a significant  
23 scale in New York City public schools. The largest  
24 program we have is with iMentor, which is working in  
25

1  
2 16 schools out of the roughly 1,900 schools that we  
3 have. We are nowhere near meeting the desperate need  
4 that students across our city face, so this  
5 resolution would call on the Department of Education  
6 to scale off the kind of great model, peer to peer  
7 mentoring that we know works and to put resources  
8 into this. We need good CBOs, like Big Brother Big  
9 Sister, training staff on how to implement these  
10 programs and we need schools to get the budget to  
11 allocate their staff time to get these up and  
12 running, and the intent of this resolution is to  
13 force this kind of conversation and I'm proud to have  
14 it heard today in this hearing. Thank you, Mr.  
15 Chairman.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Council  
17 Member Levine and before we call our first witness I  
18 want to acknowledge that we've been joined by Council  
19 Member Alan Maisel from Brooklyn, by Council Member  
20 Andy King from the Bronx, Council Member Margaret  
21 Chin from Manhattan and Council Member Debi Rose from  
22 Staten Island. And with that I will now call up, if  
23 she is here, our first witness, which is the  
24 Assistant Commissioner, Tracy Weber-Thomas, from the  
25 Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence. And

1  
2 Commissioner, I do swear everybody in, so if you'd  
3 raise your right hand..

4 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: Sure.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Do you solemnly swear  
6 or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and  
7 nothing but the truth and to answer Council Member  
8 questions honestly?

9 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: I do.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. You may  
11 begin.

12 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: 'Kay. Good morning,  
13 Chairperson Dromm and Members of the City Council  
14 Committee on Education. I am Tracy Weber-Thomas,  
15 Assistant Commissioner of the Mayor's Office to  
16 Combat Domestic Violence. Thank you for the  
17 opportunity to speak with you today about OCDV's  
18 prevention education around dating violence and  
19 youth.

20 In order to holistically respond to the  
21 incidents of domestic violence in the city, OCDV has  
22 recently focused largely on outreach to raise  
23 awareness about domestic violence and connect victims  
24 with services at our New York City Family Justice  
25

1  
2 Centers and with community and government partners  
3 citywide.

4           Since February 1st, 2014 OCDV staff has  
5 partnered in over 829 outreach events, a 336 percent  
6 increase from the same period last year and has  
7 distributed over 232,000 pieces of outreach material.  
8 Regular outreach efforts have occurred at transit  
9 hubs, business districts, beauty salons and grocery  
10 stores. In addition, by the end of 2014 OCDV staff  
11 will have presented at every community board and  
12 police Precinct Community Council meeting in the  
13 city.

14           Awareness is the greatest tool we have to  
15 combat domestic violence and it is a chief priority  
16 of OCDV and is the cornerstone of our Healthy  
17 Relationship Training Academy.

18           A critical piece of awareness and  
19 prevention is educating our youth about healthy  
20 relationships. We know that approximately 72 percent  
21 of 8th and 9th graders are dating; regrettably,  
22 abusive behaviors often normalize for young people,  
23 making it difficult for them to recognize abusive  
24 behaviors as problematic and unlikely for them to  
25 report abusive relationships. In fact, over 1 in 10

1  
2 high school students reported being physically abused  
3 by their boyfriend or girlfriend, yet only 33 percent  
4 of teens ever told anyone about the abuse and 81  
5 percent of parents believe teen dating violence is  
6 either not an issue or admit that they don't know if  
7 it's an issue.

8           In 2005 OCDV launched the New York City  
9 Healthy Relationship Training Academy to provide  
10 interactive workshops on dating violence and abuse  
11 with an emphasis on technology for adolescents, young  
12 adults, parents and service providers. The workshops  
13 are facilitated by peer educators ranging in age from  
14 17 to 25 and a senior trainer, age 29, who encourage  
15 discussion and critical thinking about these  
16 challenging topics.

17           Since its inception, the Academy has  
18 conducted over 2,050 workshops, approximately 25 per  
19 month, reaching over 40,000 young people. In 2013  
20 over half of the Academy workshops occurred in  
21 school-based programming, including during the school  
22 day, GED program, young adult internship programs,  
23 youth residing in non-secured detention facilities  
24 and after-school programs.

1  
2                   Recently, through OCDV's New York City  
3 Housing Authority Domestic Violence Response Team  
4 (NYCHA DVRT), which is a part of the Mayor's Action  
5 Plan (MAP) for Neighborhood Safety. The Academy has  
6 partnered with the Department of Youth and Community  
7 Development and NYCHA to provide on-site workshops  
8 for youth at the DYCD-run and NYCHA-run community  
9 centers in NYCHA developments. To date, over the  
10 past three months the Academy has held eight  
11 workshops with 148 participants and is in the process  
12 of scheduling many additional workshops in NYCHA  
13 developments.

14                   In closing, the Academy is a prevention-  
15 based model to raise awareness about the issue of  
16 dating violence, educate youth to recognize unhealthy  
17 relationships and provide them with the tools needed  
18 to build healthy relationships. We look forward to  
19 continuing the efforts of the Academy and working  
20 with our city and community partners and with the  
21 Council on our shared goal of raising awareness about  
22 domestic violence. Thank you.

23                   CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much,  
24 Commissioner. I'd just like to ask a few questions

25



1  
2 those types of environments -- in schools, after  
3 school, etc. -- we also do workshops at faith-based  
4 communities, at health fare conferences, so pretty  
5 much anywhere where there's a group of youth  
6 gathering.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So your relationship  
8 with the DOE, how does that work exactly; how do you  
9 know where to go or what schools to go to or... how do  
10 you figure that out?

11 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: Certainly. So  
12 basically, any school is welcome to reach out to us;  
13 we have forms online; they fill out information about  
14 the type of workshop they're looking for, provide us  
15 with, you know, relevant information about when  
16 they'd like to schedule it and then we reach out to  
17 them and do so.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So how do you do  
19 outreach overall for the program; do you do street  
20 outreach; how does that work?

21 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: It's a combination  
22 and so it's really multifaceted. So of course we use  
23 social media, we have Facebook and Twitter; we have  
24 other sorts of standard traditional media outreach.  
25 We have a network of all of the organizations who've



1  
2 ever hosted workshops and so we regularly connect  
3 with them to provide information about the workshops  
4 and also look to strategically build up a  
5 partnership, like with libraries and other  
6 organizations that have multiple locations under  
7 them.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: How many youth do you  
9 reach at these workshops?

10 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: Annually I think we  
11 average between 4,000 and 4,500, depending on the  
12 year, each year.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I'm sorry; what was  
14 that number again?

15 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: About 4,000 every  
16 year, plus or minus.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And how do you  
18 evaluate the program for its effectiveness?

19 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: Certainly. And so  
20 pretty much before and after every workshop we have a  
21 pre and post test; we're measuring knowledge about  
22 what dating violence is and resources available and  
23 warning signs, and then after the workshop they do a  
24 similar post questionnaire and then we do comparisons  
25 and we're really looking for increased knowledge,

1  
2 even over that short time period and we've been  
3 effective.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Do you do workshops  
5 for PTAs?

6 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: We can, yeah. And  
7 in fact, we do workshops with parents, as well as  
8 service providers, particularly those who work  
9 directly with youth.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Do you gear the  
11 information given at those workshops differently  
12 toward parents versus toward the youth?

13 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: Absolutely. Yeah,  
14 we basically use age-appropriate and audience-  
15 appropriate material. So our workshop that we're  
16 giving high schoolers looks different and it's more  
17 age-appropriate than those we give to the middle  
18 school students. For parents we have our standard,  
19 you know workshop about dating violence and how to  
20 talk to your teen about abuse. We also recently  
21 launched a workshop called Techno What, which is a  
22 workshop for parents, which is a companion to our  
23 Techno Love workshop, which is geared towards youth  
24 and talks about how social media and technology can  
25 be used in relationships, healthy and unhealthy.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Do you give workshops  
3 for the teachers and staff in schools?

4 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: Absolutely, if they  
5 request them, yeah, and we have.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And so you have?

7 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: Uhm-hm.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Do you know the  
9 number?

10 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: I'd have to get back  
11 to you on the numbers.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Alright, I'm just  
13 gonna turn it over to my colleagues who are here.  
14 Anybody else who's joined us since we started? No.  
15 Okay. So I'm gonna turn it over to Council Member  
16 King who has questions for you as well. He'll be  
17 followed by Council Member Maisel and then Council  
18 Member Levine.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Good afternoon and  
20 thank you for taking time on this very, very cold  
21 fall day to share a little about what your agency  
22 does and as an advocate for youth and a strong  
23 defender against domestic violence, I appreciate what  
24 you're doing; I appreciate the young man in his  
25 online initiative, as well as for all the young

1  
2 people standing up in support saying that we need to  
3 say no to any type of violence, especially domestic  
4 violence, knowing that it's not just an issue for  
5 high school, but it's a family crisis that occurs  
6 because it's a cycle of behavior that continues to  
7 happen and that's why we have domestic violence  
8 today; someone didn't teach a young person early on  
9 to love himself and how to interact with the opposite  
10 sex and today we get these type of behaviors.

11 But I wanted to know throughout the  
12 workshops that you do have, what is like your... what  
13 would be your toughest challenge; what are some of  
14 the toughest challenges of identifying bullying when  
15 it comes to high school students or some of the  
16 causes?

17 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: Well I think during  
18 the workshops is, you know a number of challenges; it  
19 all depends, but these are workshops that are led by  
20 peer educators who are generally the same age group  
21 as the audience, more or less, and who have been  
22 trained, so they've been trained how to effectively  
23 engage with the group and how to really guide the  
24 conversations, but not just talking to the audience,  
25 but really engaging participants to contribute to it.

1  
2 So I think -- you know, obviously working in  
3 different environments and really having the youth  
4 participate fully and feeling comfortable talking  
5 about something that they don't normally maybe talk  
6 about can be a challenge and I think this is  
7 important -- the Academy opens that door and provides  
8 the opportunity to do so.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Since 2005, when  
10 you first opened the doors, what kind of real success  
11 rate do you think you've been able to achieve over  
12 the last seven years, eight years?

13 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: So I think  
14 certainly, in terms of increased knowledge, we'll  
15 well over that educate... or the participants are  
16 increased in their knowledge on the vast majority of  
17 the questions, so before they may not know about the  
18 domestic violence hotline and afterwards they do and  
19 we'll be happy to share some of those more specific  
20 results of those pre and post tests. The Academy was  
21 initially funded through a federal grant; it was a  
22 temporary program and through the years we've been  
23 able to continue the program and actually expand our  
24 reach and we only had less than a handful of  
25 educators in the very beginning and now on average

1  
2 our staff of educators around 15, so we've really  
3 been able to grow the program.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Uhm-hm. Workshops  
5 that you're having for the students, how do the  
6 parents... how do you work with the parents and in  
7 keeping them involved with what the students are  
8 sharing with you; are there workshops for the parents  
9 as well; are there workshops for child and parent  
10 together, 'cause again, it is a cycle, so how...

11 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: Right. Certainly.  
12 We offer workshops to youth and to parents; if a  
13 community organization would like to have both  
14 workshops run simultaneously, we'd be happy to  
15 provide that; it comes down to the host workshop, the  
16 host of the workshop and what they're looking to do  
17 and who the audience are.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: You talk... I know  
19 you said audience and I've read your audience is like  
20 from 17 to 23... [interpose]

21 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: So for our youth  
22 workshops we have a middle school workshop, which is  
23 pretty much age 11 to 13 and then we have our teen  
24 and high school workshop which runs up through age...  
25 actually have it up to age 24 in some of the after-

1  
2 school programs or other programs that we go to by  
3 DYCD contractors. So we have workshops for young  
4 people as young as 11 all the way up, and then we  
5 have workshops for parents and then we have workshops  
6 for service providers.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Do you find the  
8 greatest need is at middle school or at high school?

9 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: I think everyone  
10 could benefit from learning more about healthy  
11 relationships.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: No, no, I  
13 understand that, [background comment] I'm just trying  
14 to learn; do you find with the work that you've been  
15 doing that you've gotten more crisis in the middle  
16 school level, in the earlier children or in the high  
17 school level?

18 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: We've certainly  
19 received more workshop request forms for the older  
20 ages, but I don't think that's necessarily the  
21 measure that will answer your question, but that's  
22 the information I have.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay. Alright.  
24 You've been very helpful and I really appreciate your  
25 time and young ladies and men I thank you for

1  
2 attending today also. Thank you. Thank you, Mr.  
3 Chair.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Council  
5 Member Maisel.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: Thank you, Mr.  
7 Chairman. Earlier, when Chairman Dromm asked you  
8 about workshops for teachers, you said there was an  
9 ongoing effort; probably not enough. It's been my  
10 experience that teachers are really the first line in  
11 dealing with issues of bullying because when the kids  
12 start... when they're in the process of getting  
13 bullied, their grades suffer, they stop coming to  
14 class, so teachers recognize there's something wrong,  
15 but most teachers are not trained to determine or  
16 recognize this. Are there any efforts to try to get  
17 perhaps staff development times, when the teachers  
18 are all together and they can be trained together;  
19 has there ever been any effort to do that?

20 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: We're happy to  
21 provide workshops to groups who reach out to us and  
22 we really try to work with every entity that reached  
23 out to us to provide a workshop that they need.  
24 We've had... [crosstalk]



1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: Well they have to  
3 know... they have to know what you do before they can  
4 reach out...

5 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: Certainly.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: but a lot of  
7 principals are searching for topics for staff  
8 development because they're in charge of staff  
9 development in their schools; it would, I think a  
10 very good idea if the schools were contacted and say  
11 look, this is a very important issue, you do staff  
12 development, why don't you reserve one staff  
13 development meeting for training the teachers how to  
14 recognize bullying and all the other issues that  
15 we're talking about today?

16 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: So just to be clear,  
17 our program doesn't address the particular area of  
18 bullying; it's more specific to intimate partner  
19 violence... [interpose]

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: Yeah, no I  
21 understand, also... [interpose]

22 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: So...

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: certainly in the  
24 high schools, it would seem to me that if the... we  
25 have about a 110, 120 high schools; if they're aware

1  
2 that you would come down to staff development, you'd  
3 get all the teachers at once.

4 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: And you know, in  
5 terms of getting the word out there about our  
6 workshops available, because you know, if we are  
7 contacted by any group to do staff training, we  
8 certainly would do it; certainly if you could help  
9 spread the word about the Academy, so... [interpose]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: Well spreading  
11 the word is what's important.

12 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: Uhm-hm.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: Thank you.

14 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: Uhm-hm. Absolutely.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: 'Kay, Council Member  
16 Levine, followed by Council Member Wills.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Thank you,  
18 Chairman Dromm. Assistant Commissioner, I'm really  
19 happy that you're here; I understand that bullying  
20 doesn't precisely fall under your purview, but we  
21 appreciate your input on this. DOE probably has more  
22 direct impact on this issue; they have a policy of  
23 not testifying at hearings that are on resos, which  
24 we understand, although certainly I think we would  
25 have good questions for them. My read on their

1  
2 programs, based on the briefing they offered, is that  
3 they too are focused primarily on intimate partner  
4 violence and abuse, which is just a critical,  
5 critical issue; we don't wanna minimize it, but of a  
6 slightly different character than bullying more  
7 broadly. They do note the importance of guidance  
8 counselors, which actually the last package of  
9 legislation that this Committee was working on was to  
10 beef up the ranks of the guidance counselors, so  
11 we're happy to see that issue linked. Have you  
12 looked at all at the role that having a strong role  
13 model or adult figure in the life of a young person  
14 can play in helping their self-esteem and helping  
15 them deal with abusive situations and helping prevent  
16 them from themselves becoming abusive?

17 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: Because the nature  
18 of our program is focused on peer education, our  
19 focus really has been on utilizing peers to engage  
20 one another on sensitive topics and so that's really  
21 been our focus, is on the peer relationship.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Related to  
23 intimate violence, but the lessons I'm sure are  
24 applicable more broadly. And are you matching people  
25

1  
2 of the same age or is it an older/younger; big  
3 sister/big brother type relationship?

4 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: Our educators are  
5 between the age of 17 and 25 and a lot of times we're  
6 assigning them based on a number of criteria;  
7 availability is one of them, in terms of the  
8 audience, but they're trained to work with the  
9 various age groups.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Is there an  
11 ongoing relationship for additional one on one  
12 sessions or is this during a limited training only?

13 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: It's a limited  
14 training, although we do go back, so we have a number  
15 of workshops where for example, an organization could  
16 host a workshop we call our signature workshop;  
17 generally an overview of dating violence and healthy  
18 relationships, and if we can come back with a part  
19 two, we can come back again and do the Techno Love  
20 workshop, so we do have a couple different workshops  
21 that some of organizations have scheduled as a  
22 series, but generally that's the nature of the  
23 program are these one workshop-based program.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: That all sounds  
25 really impactful; I just observe that the power of

1 mentoring is the long-term relationship building and  
2 a one on one relationship that allows a measure of  
3 confidence-building so that a young person can say  
4 things that they might not always be comfortable  
5 saying to a teacher or even a parent or a principal;  
6 it's really the intent behind our Res 0355, it  
7 applies for sure on mentoring, but I would imagine  
8 also in the related issue of domestic violence.

9  
10 Anyway, we thank you for your great  
11 efforts and for answering our questions today; really  
12 appreciate it.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: 'Kay, thank you  
14 Council Member Levine. I wanna go to Council Member  
15 Wills, followed by Rose and then Chin.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Thank you, Mr.  
17 Chair. Good afternoon, Deputy Commissioner. Before  
18 I ask you, because I have some other questions; Mr.  
19 Chair, is anyone from the DOE here to testify or to..  
20 [crosstalk]

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: No, the policy in the  
22 past has been that the DOE doesn't testify on  
23 resolutions, they did however submit testimony and  
24 they do have a representative here in the audience  
25 today.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Okay, great.

3 Thank you.

4 Deputy Commissioner, just really quickly,  
5 to go back to what the two Council Members previous  
6 to me were talking about, the training for  
7 principals; the program that... the Teen RAPP program  
8 has been extremely successful and in my district it's  
9 in one school, August Martin and is run by the  
10 provider CAMBA. I visited them recently, within like  
11 the last three weeks, and in that time they showed  
12 their peer to peer mentoring, which was incredible,  
13 but they have established themselves as a point of  
14 confidence in the school, where a lot of the young  
15 people will bypass teachers and guidance counselors  
16 and come directly to them. So what I wanted to know  
17 was, the professional development piece for the  
18 educators and the administrators, is there a way that  
19 we could begin -- I know you said that the efforts  
20 are ongoing, but could we focus part of our efforts  
21 on making sure that those types of providers who are  
22 already well established as points of confidence  
23 begin to maybe train our educators so that that rubs  
24 off, if you will, to the teachers and principals and  
25 assistant principals and different staff and the

1  
2 training rubs off or is taught to them so that this  
3 is not just something... that capacity can grow, there  
4 be capacity-building; is that something that we could  
5 focus on?

6 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: Well I can't address  
7 the question particularly related to Department of  
8 Education, but I can say again, you know, if anyone  
9 who's interested in having or hosting a workshop,  
10 we'd be happy to do that and to come out and speak to  
11 the audience; we do that all the time, so we'd be  
12 happy to do that upon request.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Thank you, Mr.  
14 Chair.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Council Member Rose.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you. I too  
17 wanna commend the young ladies who are here in  
18 council chambers today for this hearing and what is  
19 particularly glaring is that they are predominantly  
20 young ladies and I don't see very many young men, and  
21 so that leads me to my question, which -- you stated  
22 that 4,000 students attended the workshops in the  
23 past year; could you give me an idea of what  
24 percentage of those were male?  
25

1  
2 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: I don't have the  
3 statistics in front of me, but we provide workshops  
4 to men and women, young men and young women and our  
5 peer educators are both male and female. So I can  
6 certainly look to get that information to you.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you.  
8 [background comment] Do you think that we are  
9 adequately reaching and addressing the male  
10 population?

11 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: Well for our  
12 program, we provide these workshops and are inclusive  
13 in the perspectives of everyone in a situation; in  
14 fact, I'll give an example in which way is that we,  
15 during our workshops, use gender-neutral language.  
16 So for example, we say partner; we don't say  
17 boyfriend/girlfriend [background comment] in terms  
18 of... because anyone can be an abuser and anyone can be  
19 a victim and so we're very mindful of that, so we  
20 really try to make the workshops welcoming to  
21 everyone, to have an honest conversation about the  
22 [background comment] situation. In terms of the  
23 numbers reporting abuse, I think it was quoted  
24 earlier; about 1 in 10 high school students in the  
25 past year report being physically abusive; that's on



1  
2 equal rates for boys and girls, so that's another  
3 statistic that we're mindful of.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: So do you think  
5 that we're reaching an adequate or an appropriate  
6 number of the targeted or at risk populations?

7 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: Our academy was  
8 developed with that in mind to make sure that we are  
9 inclusive of all populations and the perspectives of  
10 youth from all different backgrounds and so that was  
11 built into our academy and I think that we -- like I  
12 said before, we will go anywhere throughout the five  
13 boroughs to provide workshops, and so we really wanna  
14 make sure this information, which is so important to  
15 everyone to receive, is received and available and we  
16 do our best to do that.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: We recently had a  
18 hearing about the lack of adequate number of guidance  
19 counselors in the high schools and the middle  
20 schools; have you worked specifically with DOE in an  
21 effort to sort of fill this void and when a student  
22 has the need for a counselor, is there some sort of  
23 cross-referral system or something because there is  
24 such a lack of guidance counselors in schools?

1  
2 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: When we do our  
3 workshops, no matter what the setting is, we make  
4 sure that the participants know resources that are  
5 available, so we actually distribute a listing that  
6 provides resources in all the five boroughs about  
7 where they can get help and of course provide them  
8 with critical hotline numbers and 311, etc. So we  
9 really make sure that our educators are well equipped  
10 to share information about where to get help, because  
11 oftentimes we do see someone in our workshop  
12 disclosing that they themselves might be a victim or  
13 a survivor of dating violence or that they're  
14 exhibiting worrisome behavior themselves and so it's  
15 something that we're very mindful; when we leave, we  
16 wanna make sure we leave this information behind.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: And when a student  
18 indicates that there is a need for an intervention,  
19 some type of intervention or referral, are the  
20 parents ever advised that there's an issue and that  
21 they might need to help intercede?

22 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: I would have to say  
23 that would just depend on the host of the workshop  
24 and their rules and what they do and how they engage;  
25 we're simply there to provide information to the

1 youth and to the host. We can follow up; we do speak  
2 to the staff on site who are there, who are present  
3 during the workshops about any disclosures we get,  
4 just to make sure that there's a warm handoff; that  
5 it doesn't just stop with our educators; we do advise  
6 the workshop host staff, but it's up to them, you  
7 know, to follow their rules and.. 'cause they are  
8 very.. 'cause we go to so many different types of  
9 locations to provide workshops.  
10

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: So there's more  
12 than just the education? I know you're dealing with  
13 peer educators, so if there's a need for referral --  
14 is there someone who sort of supervises and oversees  
15 the peer educators so that if there's an additional  
16 need for a referral or an intervention, that that  
17 would happen, coming from, you know, this workshop?

18 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: Any youth in the  
19 workshops who presents and discloses to our peer  
20 educators, basically the -- again, the peer educator  
21 would speak to the staff member who's at that host  
22 organization; anytime that we are particularly  
23 concerned about a situation will be a case by case  
24 situation about what happens next, respecting the  
25 autonomy of the individual.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: My last question  
3 is; is there some education model or vehicle that you  
4 use to educate parents to recognize signs of maybe  
5 date abuse, cyberbullying; all of the above?

6 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: Absolutely. So we  
7 have two workshops particularly tailored to parents;  
8 one is about the signs of dating violence and what  
9 makes a healthy relationship and how to speak with  
10 their teen and the other workshop is specifically on  
11 technology and how it's used and really to give  
12 information to the parents about the most popular  
13 social media platform, just to provide some  
14 background about how they might be used so that  
15 they're aware of that and give some information about  
16 how they can approach a topic with their child.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you so much  
18 and I think it's very important that we educate  
19 parents how to recognize these different levels of  
20 abuse that sometimes our young people are subjected  
21 to. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Council  
23 Member Chin, followed by Council Member Williams.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you, Chair.  
25 Assistant Commissioner, do you coordinate your

1 training efforts with the Department of Education?

2 And the reason I'm asking that is that; I mean how do  
3 we make sure that we get this type of training, the  
4 workshops that you do provide to teenagers, into  
5 every school so every high school and middle school  
6 student would have an opportunity to participate?  
7

8 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: Any school that  
9 reaches out to us to request a workshop, we will do  
10 our very best to accommodate and we're able to  
11 usually accommodate almost all requests, so we're  
12 happy to go out to any school that requests a  
13 workshop.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: But how do we get  
15 to a point where every school will get it; you know  
16 what I mean? Because right now you're expecting the  
17 school to reach out, but how do we get to a point  
18 where it's mandated that every school needs to do  
19 this type of training, 'cause it's so important for  
20 our students. So how do we advocate with you in  
21 coordination with DOE and that's why some of the  
22 resolutions that we're discussing today is to sort of  
23 mandate Department of Education, State Department of  
24 Ed, to make it a requirement so that every student in  
25 middle school and high school will have an

1  
2 opportunity to be exposed and learn about how to  
3 protect themselves.

4 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: I can't address the  
5 question about Department of Education; I could just  
6 speak from our program's perspective and that  
7 basically is that we're happy to go provide workshops  
8 to any school that requests it.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: So do you have  
10 capacity to go to every school?

11 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: At this point, I'd  
12 have to go back, but that probably would not... we only  
13 can do about 25-30 workshops a month, so.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: So you don't have  
15 the capacity right now?

16 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: At the moment, I  
17 don't see that at the moment.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Okay. I mean  
19 there's gotta be some coordination, 'cause otherwise  
20 it doesn't make sense that the DOE and... I mean I  
21 would see it more your area, in terms of the Mayor's  
22 Office to Combat Domestic Violence, to really deal  
23 with the community, parents, and then when we're  
24 talking about students, is really a DOE  
25 responsibility. And Chair Dromm, I think we need to

1  
2 bring it back to DOE; they should have been here  
3 today; just submitting a testimony is not enough,  
4 'cause they should let us know; I mean, how do we get  
5 to a point where every student in our school system  
6 gets this type of training? And my question to you,  
7 in terms of the peer educators; how many of them are  
8 bilingual? Are they able to do workshops in Spanish,  
9 in Chinese; in Korean, especially for the immigrant  
10 student population?

11 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: We can provide  
12 workshops in English and Spanish, to both young  
13 people as well as parents. In terms of the number of  
14 educators who speak different languages, I have to  
15 get back to you on that specific number.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Yeah, I think that  
17 is really important to have the different language  
18 capacity so that we could reach a lot more of the  
19 students who are in need and also their parents.  
20 'Kay. Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Council  
22 Member Chin and I hear your concern about the DOE;  
23 it's just been tradition in the past that they don't  
24 come to a hearing on a resolution, but we could do an  
25 oversight hearing on programs to combat domestic

1  
2 violence, bullying, cyberbullying, etc. As you know,  
3 that's been a major priority of mine, since before  
4 being elected to the Council and so it is something  
5 that I would like to follow up further upon. Today  
6 we specifically wanted to address these resolutions  
7 and that's why the structure is the way that it is  
8 today. So thank you. And Council Member Williams.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you, Mr.  
10 Chair and the Deputy Commissioner for testifying; I'm  
11 sorry I missed some of the testimony. But with the  
12 Healthy Relationship Training Academy, I missed it;  
13 is it done in schools or it's not done in the  
14 schools? It's done in the schools, but not in  
15 coordination with DOE?

16 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: So about half of our  
17 workshops are performed school-based program, and  
18 whether it's during the school day, after school,  
19 etc., so and then the other half of our workshops are  
20 held in many other environments where youth gather.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I just briefly  
22 wanna talk about the effectiveness. I know that you  
23 talked about some evaluation that you do; can you  
24 just say what that is again?



1  
2 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: Certainly. So  
3 before and after each of our workshops we do a pre  
4 and a post test to really get us to understand what  
5 the knowledge is coming into the workshop and then  
6 how much they've learned after the workshop, and so  
7 that's something that we've been doing almost since  
8 the inception of the program and something we monitor  
9 closely as a way to understand the effectiveness of  
10 the program.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: And have the  
12 results been so far?

13 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: There's tremendous  
14 increase in knowledge before the workshop and after  
15 the workshop and I'm happy to put together some data  
16 points on some of the more specifics around those...  
17 [interpose]

18 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: You don't have  
19 any of the data points now?

20 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: At the moment I  
21 don't; I can give approximations, but I'll get you  
22 the specific information.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: And what are  
24 the approximations that you think it is?

25

1  
2 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: Approximately 90  
3 percent of the participants increased their knowledge  
4 on all topic areas, but I'll give you the more  
5 specific information.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: And how many  
7 young people have gone through it?

8 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: In total we've held  
9 over 2,050 workshops and there's approximately 15-20  
10 young people on average at each workshop.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: About 25-30,000  
12 people; is that right?

13 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: 40,000.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: 40,000.

15 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: Yeah.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Is there any  
17 follow up, to know if they've retained the knowledge  
18 and there's been any changes in behavior?

19 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: The nature of the  
20 program is basically to provide a workshop one time,  
21 although we do have -- we've expanded our curriculum  
22 offering and so we do have other workshops that a  
23 particular location could request, so we could have  
24 our signature workshop on dating violence and healthy  
25 relationships; then we can go back and provide a part

1  
2 two workshop and then come back again to do our  
3 Techno Love, for example, would be three workshops.  
4 But the nature of the program is to really provide  
5 single workshops to entities that request it.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: And are you  
7 working with anybody outside looking into the  
8 effectiveness or the evaluation of the program?

9 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: In terms of an  
10 outside research group or? Basically we have been  
11 doing it since the beginning internally.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay.  
13 [background comment] Thank you. Mr. Chair, can I... I  
14 just wanna make a comment on something unrelated, if  
15 that's alright. I just wanna take this opportunity  
16 -- this is my first time in a while being in a  
17 hearing with Council Member Debi Rose and I wanted to  
18 say how proud I am to be a Council Member with her at  
19 this time and I believe her to be one of the most  
20 honest, sincere elected officials actually in the  
21 City of New York and I'm blessed to be here with her  
22 and so I wanna thank her for our friendship as well  
23 and thank her very much. And I know we're talking  
24 about bullying; I don't wanna make light at all of  
25 this, but I believe there are some of us that are

1  
2 encountering bullying as we speak today from other  
3 entities. Thank you. And thank you for allowing me  
4 the time.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Council  
6 Member. And I think in her case, some bullying has  
7 occurred, if you ask me and I also was proud to  
8 travel out to Staten Island to offer her support,  
9 along with her campaign folks as well and so I  
10 welcome Council Member Debi Rose back; we're glad to  
11 see you, and we love you.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you all; I  
13 can't express how gratified I am with the outpouring  
14 love and support; you have left me speechless; I am  
15 just thankful. Thank you all.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. I have  
17 one last question, if you don't mind. You know I've  
18 been involved in the lesbian, gay, bisexual,  
19 transgender rights movement since... for 20-something  
20 years, actually; at many of the trainings from either  
21 domestic violence workshops to bullying, etc.,  
22 oftentimes the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender  
23 words are left out and I think that sends the wrong  
24 message because you know, by saying that's something  
25 we can't talk about, you send the message that it's

1  
2 so bad that you can't even really talk about it, so  
3 then it must be okay to bully them or to, you know,  
4 not even question whether the fight the two guys got  
5 into is a fight between two heterosexual men or if  
6 it's a fight between intimate partners. And so I  
7 just wanted to know, how do you deal with LGBT stuff  
8 in your workshops and do you always, always mention  
9 LGBT?

10 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: Absolutely. So  
11 first, just to take a step back in the creation of  
12 the curriculum that we use, we actually developed it  
13 to be inclusive of a variety of populations,  
14 including parenting teens and immigrant teens and  
15 LGBTQ teens; in fact we had focus groups and we  
16 revised our curriculum to make sure that our language  
17 is inclusive and it's a very important point during  
18 our training of our peer educators, they undertake  
19 about 25 hours plus and ongoing training to become  
20 peer educators and it's absolutely a cornerstone of  
21 the work that we do. And for example, in some of our  
22 case scenarios we use names that could be for either  
23 males or females so that people can really get used  
24 to discussing dating violence is something that can  
25 happen to anybody and we need to be mindful of that.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: 'Kay, good; I don't  
3 think that there are any other questions at this  
4 point, but I do wanna thank you for coming in and for  
5 your office being present at this hearing today.  
6 Thank you very much.

7 TRACY WEBER-THOMAS: My pleasure. Thank  
8 you for having me.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I'm going to call up  
10 our next panel, and that is Brian O'Connor, Futures  
11 Without Violence, 94109; Anthony Vargas, representing  
12 himself; Michael Martinez, Students for Protection  
13 and Jenny DeBower from the Center for Anti-Violence  
14 Education. Is Jenny here? Okay.

15 [background comment]

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: 'Kay, thank you and  
17 I'm gonna ask you all to raise your right hand so I  
18 can swear you in. Do you solemnly swear or affirm to  
19 tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the  
20 truth and to answer Council Member questions  
21 honestly?

22 [background comments]

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, very good.  
24 Thank you. Who would like to begin? Okay, very

1  
2 good. Just state your name and make sure that mic's  
3 on for us.

4 BRIAN O'CONNOR: Hello.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah.

6 BRIAN O'CONNOR: Hi; thank you very much  
7 for... I'm excited to be here. I'm Brian O'Connor and  
8 I'm the Director of Public Education Campaigns and  
9 Programs for Futures Without Violence and on behalf  
10 of the organization I respectfully submit the  
11 following testimony on awareness and prevention  
12 programming in New York City public schools' athletic  
13 leagues to help and prevent intimate partner  
14 violence.

15 Fore more than 30 years, we at Futures  
16 Without Violence have been at the forefront of major  
17 efforts that address violence against women and  
18 children throughout the United States and  
19 increasingly around the world. We are recognized as  
20 one of the nation's leading organizations working to  
21 eliminate intimate partner violence in the home and  
22 in the community. We work in partnership with  
23 countless entities, from federal and state  
24 governments, Congress and major foundations to  
25 community organizations, individual leaders and a

1  
2 select group of private corporations to develop  
3 solutions that end intimate partner violence and  
4 sexual assault, while promoting healthy  
5 relationships.

6 In particular, ending such violence and  
7 abuse among young people today is a primary objective  
8 in the prevention of relationship abuse among adults;  
9 therefore, we focus deeply on awareness and  
10 prevention programming in schools and our Coaching  
11 Men into Men program specifically engages men to  
12 teach boys the importance of respect for women and  
13 girls and that violence never equals strength.

14 Teen dating violence typically refers to  
15 a relationship abuse in which the partners are  
16 teenagers, not living together and do not have a  
17 child in common. But as was noted earlier, in 2011,  
18 according to the New York City High School Youth Risk  
19 Behavior Survey, just over 10 percent of male and  
20 female high school students in the city reported  
21 being hit, slapped or physically hurt on purpose by a  
22 boyfriend or girlfriend within the last year;  
23 sometimes the resulting injuries caused a visit to  
24 the emergency room.



1  
2 We know that some of this violence can be  
3 prevented if we start teaching early, providing  
4 examples of positive, healthy relationships. A Liz  
5 Claiborne and Teenage Research Unlimited study from  
6 2007 reports that 1 in 4 teenagers in a relationship  
7 says they have been called names, harassed or put  
8 down by their partner through cell phones and  
9 texting. In a 2006-2007 study of New York City  
10 youth, ages 13-21, reported that 48 percent of these  
11 young people stated that their current or recent  
12 partner insisted on knowing where they were at all  
13 times, 48 percent. Another 43 percent stated that  
14 their partner checked their cell phone to see who  
15 they call, with more than half of these young people  
16 reporting this occurred sometimes or often. This  
17 behavior is alarming and we know that it can  
18 sometimes lead or be a precursor [bell] to escalated  
19 violence down the road.

20 Prevention strategies have typically  
21 addressed women and girls as victims and portrayed  
22 men as perpetrators. The focus is often on how women  
23 and girls can avoid abuse by boyfriends husbands or  
24 sexual assault by strangers and acquaintances, and  
25 while this work is valuable, these are risk reduction

1  
2 and not prevention approaches that try to "teach  
3 women and girls how to avoid victimization," but they  
4 do not work to reduce the number of men who use  
5 violence. For all too long women have bore the brunt  
6 of responsibility for addressing intimate partner  
7 violence, though in recent years concerted efforts  
8 have led several fields -- domestic violence and  
9 sexual assault providers, college campuses, the  
10 military, Departments of Health, law enforcement,  
11 sports institutions and youth-serving professionals  
12 to embrace strategies that positively engage men in  
13 the prevention of various forms of violence against  
14 women and girls.

15           One strategy that has steadily gained  
16 prominence is both the critique of traditional  
17 violent expressions of masculinity and the promotion  
18 of healthier and broader forms of it. Most men are  
19 not violent and too many have not been offered the  
20 opportunity to be part of the solution. Our national  
21 polling shows that men don't recognize their own  
22 responsibility and ability to help end domestic  
23 violence, even though their participation is vital to  
24 progress from helping just some people avoid it to  
25 actually ending it altogether. You don't need to

1  
2 look much further than recent headlines in  
3 professional sports to see the importance of acting  
4 now.

5           Futures' program, Coaching Boys Into Men,  
6 uses coaching as a metaphor to engage men to help  
7 mold the attitudes and behaviors of young males in  
8 their life. More specifically, the program inspires  
9 athletic coaches to address issues of violence and  
10 relationship abuse head-on. Athletic coaches play an  
11 influential role in the lives of young men; often  
12 serving as a parent or mentor to the athletes they  
13 coach. Because of these special relationships,  
14 coaches are uniquely positioned to positively  
15 motivate how young men and women think and behave.  
16 Coaching Boys Into Men focuses on fostering the  
17 leadership of young males by enhancing a coach's  
18 ability to instruct his male athletes on what it  
19 takes to be successful on and off the field. It's  
20 important to note that these young men are typically  
21 the popular kids and hold a lot of social influence  
22 over their peers.

23           The program's curriculum is built on a  
24 series of coached athlete teach-easy tactics and  
25 trainings that illustrate ways to role model and

1  
2 promote healthy choices and relationships. The  
3 design, created in partnership with the National High  
4 School Athletic Coaches Association -- this is the  
5 coach's kit that I'm holding up here -- created in  
6 partnership with the National High School Athletic  
7 Coaches Association, guides coaches on how to  
8 incorporate the philosophies associated with  
9 teamwork, sportsmanship, integrity, fair play and  
10 respect into routine practice and strategy sessions  
11 and the program aligns with the fall, winter and  
12 spring high school sports season with the training  
13 for coaches occurring one or two weeks before the  
14 implementation season starts and one coach  
15 facilitated lesson occurs per week for 12 weeks  
16 following.

17           Recommendations. In order to prevent  
18 teen dating intimate partner violence we need  
19 strategies that address the roots of the issue by  
20 analyzing the roles and responsibilities of men and  
21 boys, challenging cultural norms and the institutions  
22 that reinforce rape, battering and sexist attitudes.  
23 Examining how intimate partner violence connects with  
24 gender socialization and finally, offering ways to  
25

1  
2 raise boys and girls to be healthy, non-violent  
3 partners and parents.

4           Coaching Boys Into Men is one of the only  
5 evidence-based programs of its kind, employing the  
6 aforementioned strategies. Having been proven  
7 effective and easy to implement in school districts  
8 from Juneau, Alaska and Dallas, Texas to San  
9 Francisco and Boston, results from a three-year  
10 rigorous Centers for Disease Control and Prevention-  
11 funded evaluation of the program were published in  
12 the Journal of Adolescent Health in April 2012 and  
13 12-month follow-up results were published just last  
14 year in April 2013 in the Journal of Preventive  
15 Medicine. This three-year study conducted with 2,000  
16 athletes in 16 high schools in Sacramento, California  
17 found that athletes who received the program were  
18 significantly more likely to do something to  
19 intervene, to speak up, like telling their coach or  
20 teacher when they witnessed disrespectful or harmful  
21 behavior among their peers. Coaching Boys Into Men  
22 specifically prompts positive bystander behavior and  
23 what's more, the study also found that boys in the  
24 program actually reduced their own abusive behavior  
25 toward girls as well.

1  
2 Futures Without Violence recommends that  
3 New York City public schools incorporate dating  
4 violence and sexual assault prevention programming  
5 that employs awareness and education tactics with  
6 students. Our Coaching Boys Into Men program  
7 consistently partners with a variety of local groups  
8 all across the country. We want to collaborate with  
9 youth-centered New York City-based stakeholders, such  
10 as Day One, Girls for Gender Equity, the Joe Torre  
11 Safe At Home Foundation and others, as well as  
12 regional and national organizations like Men Can Stop  
13 Rape and Mentors in Violence Prevention, to bring a  
14 blend of programming that addresses the issue of teen  
15 dating violence by engaging men and boys through  
16 sports as a platform to engage and build healthy  
17 relationship skills among New York City student  
18 athletes and therefore the entire school overall.

19 Thank you for your consideration and as I  
20 said before, the time and opportunity is now.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much  
22 and I appreciate your testimony; I just need to ask  
23 the other people who are giving testimony, I forgot  
24 to mention, the three-minute time limit, so if you  
25 can keep yourselves to that I would appreciate it,

1  
2 but I did not want to interrupt you because I didn't  
3 think it would be fair since I did not mention it  
4 before you started. So who would like to go next?  
5 [background comment] Okay.

6 MICHAEL MARTINEZ: Good afternoon,  
7 Chairman Dromm and the Council Committee on  
8 Education. My name is Michael Martinez and I am the  
9 Executive Director of Students for Protection. The  
10 goal of my group is to be a student-led grassroots  
11 organization helping students, teachers, schools and  
12 government officials like yourselves to reform  
13 bullying laws and policies in New York State and  
14 City. We are agreeing to the passage of Resolutions  
15 0009, 0149 and 0335 [sic] and we also agree to the  
16 other resolutions said today.

17 The Department of Education has major  
18 issues with communication and so does the 1,378  
19 schools that did not report any bullying incidents,  
20 according to a New York Daily News article this past  
21 June. That is more than 80 percent of 1,400 schools  
22 in New York City that has lied through paper that  
23 bullying did not occur in their schools.

24 In 2012 the DOE failed to attend an anti-  
25 bullying forum by the Public Advocate, who is now

1  
2 currently the Mayor. In the years 2011-2014 the  
3 Department of Education and particular schools failed  
4 to promote and perform safety transfer for many  
5 students, including my nephew; in fact, my nephew was  
6 denied a safety transfer even after numerous  
7 incidents that occurred within three months. Many  
8 co-located schools are also at risk for high  
9 bullying, especially that the statistics are not  
10 reported to know that these schools have any policies  
11 on student harassment. Should all schools follow the  
12 chancellor's regulations, we all have to watch a  
13 specific attention to make sure all the rules fed to  
14 the current education status. In a Council Committee  
15 on Education hearing last September, it was founded  
16 that advisors classes were unsuccessful; even a  
17 friend of mine who had to go to summer school just  
18 because she had failed an advisory class. How can  
19 advisory classes are graded when it is supposed to  
20 help students succeed and prepare for college? [sic]  
21 Also, summer school students do not get any  
22 information of who to go to for help when bullying  
23 occurs in their summer schools. It is as if simply  
24 the DOE forgot that bullying exists during the  
25 summer. However, let these problems not trouble us



1  
2 too much; we are far from rock bottom, but  
3 unfortunately we're only hanging by a branch. When  
4 my middle school had a bullying awareness class in  
5 regular time... [bell] oh... the bullying incidents in my  
6 class went to nearly zero.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: You can continue,  
8 sir.

9 MICHAEL MARTINEZ: Yes, thank you. When  
10 I was mentored my junior year of high school last  
11 year, my academics raised after my own grades  
12 declining due to my bullying experience. I stand  
13 before you now as a living proof that these  
14 resolutions should exist and will exist as  
15 requirements for the DOE. The DOE has full potential  
16 to become better, but we need their cooperation.  
17 Please pass these resolutions because they are vital  
18 to our academic careers. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. And next.

20 [background comments]

21 ANTHONY VARGAS: Good afternoon; my name  
22 is Anthony Vargas; I'm a senior at the Washington  
23 Heights Expeditionary Learning School (WHEELS). I  
24 came to WHEELS in 8th grade when I had to leave my  
25 previous school. I was being bullied for two

1  
2 consecutive years, during 6th and 7th grades because  
3 of my mother's condition. My mother suffered a car  
4 accident when she was hospitalized for several  
5 months, suffered many injuries and was able to return  
6 to work only two years later. School should be a  
7 second home to students, not a place that they fear.  
8 In my previous school I experienced verbal and  
9 physical bullying since the first day. Constantly I  
10 would hear comments such as, "hey, how can she run  
11 after you" and "ha, ha, your mother's handicapped."  
12 Moreover, one day, while walking with my mother in  
13 school, it was the first day of 8th grade, enter a  
14 room; a student shoved me in the back with a few  
15 textbooks. It's not a coincidence that the same kid  
16 is one of the individuals who participated in the  
17 verbal form of bullying.

18           Students in New York City experience this  
19 all the time, every single day. Right now someone  
20 has experienced the same bullying that I was. I was  
21 lucky enough to have a mentoring program, a helping  
22 hand, which was my mother, and an opportunity that is  
23 applied [sic] from others. In New York City nearly  
24 one-fifth of public high school students reported  
25 they have been bullied at school; bullying is on the

1  
2 rise. As a 10th grader at WHEELS I started a  
3 campaign called Stop School Violence aimed to getting  
4 peer to peer mentoring programs in our schools. My  
5 school has built a model, such as Peer to Peer  
6 Mentoring Programs, where we have someone to look up  
7 to, not only as an authority figure, but we have a  
8 helping hand that's another student.

9 We need peer to peer mentoring programs  
10 in our schools. Many students don't have anyone to  
11 talk to at school or when they go to their homes.  
12 Peer to peer mentoring programs allow students to  
13 have a helping hand, a friend that is not too much  
14 older than them that they can relate to and speak to  
15 without the fear of having them be an authority  
16 figure.

17 According to Big Brother Big Sister, as  
18 Council Member Mark Levine said, 46 percent of  
19 students who get mentored are less likely to begin  
20 using drugs, 27 percent are less likely to begin  
21 using alcohol, 52 percent are less likely to skip  
22 school, 37 percent are less likely to skip a class  
23 and 33 percent are less likely to hit someone. With  
24 more than a thousand people supporting my Stop School  
25 Violence petition online and organizations such as

1  
2 Teach for America, Citizens Committee for New York  
3 City and many more organizations, we call for the New  
4 York City Department of Education to bring more peer  
5 to peer mentoring programs into schools to combat  
6 bullying and violence. Thank you very much.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you and next,  
8 please.

9 JENNY DEBOWER: Hello and good afternoon.  
10 Thanks to the Committee for having this hearing  
11 today. My name is Jenny DeBower; I'm the Program  
12 Director at an agency called The Center for Anti-  
13 Violence Education in Brooklyn. I'm also a 20-year  
14 veteran working with youth who are hard to reach or  
15 considered at risk, so I've been working for 10 years  
16 previous to this job with LGBT youth at the Hetrick-  
17 Martin Institute, LGBT Community Center, as well as  
18 with foster care youth and homeless youth.

19 I'm pleased to offer testimony today in  
20 support of all the resolutions, but I'm gonna cut to  
21 the chase and talk about doing education in middle  
22 schools. I think we have established that the rates  
23 of relationship violence are already high by the time  
24 that young people get to high school and there are a  
25 number of relationship violence education programs in

1  
2 high schools, but there are very few in middle  
3 schools.

4           So being located in Brooklyn, we were  
5 recently approached by two middle schools in Sunset  
6 Park, 'cause we have some funding from City Council  
7 Member Menchaca through DOVE to do relationship  
8 violence prevention. The schools approached me, as a  
9 fellow social worker and said can you please come and  
10 do something, we are seeing these problems, we are  
11 seeing overtly sexual behavior on the part of 10-;  
12 11-year-old kids sexting, you know, nude pictures, a  
13 lot of sexual harassment and groping, which was  
14 leading to them having to have their own kids sort of  
15 arrested and taken out of the school, which is not a  
16 great way of handling these situations, and sexual  
17 harassment is a sexual bullying, it is a form of  
18 bullying. They were seeing even pregnancies already,  
19 a lot of girls self-cutting. All of these issues are  
20 very complicated and overlapping. So they begged us  
21 to come in, do some assertiveness training for young  
22 people, particularly girls, do training on what it  
23 means to set a boundary or to give consent; this is a  
24 very complicated issue for a 10-, 11- or 12-year-old,  
25 and to show them that there were options besides

1  
2 early pregnancy, explore their own strengths and  
3 talents.

4           We know already relationship violence  
5 rates are high for young people; also we know that  
6 half of all rapes of females occur before the age of  
7 18 and 22 percent, almost a quarter of those, before  
8 the age of 12. So we're already looking at a high  
9 level of risk factors for young people in middle  
10 school.

11           But here's the good news; the protective  
12 factors for preventing relationship violence and  
13 future domestic violence, the protective factors are  
14 known, there's a lot of research on this. So the  
15 protective factors include education surrounding  
16 healthy relationships, mentoring, teaching gender  
17 equity, problem-solving skills, increasing sense of  
18 self-advocacy, good peer relationships, family  
19 involvement -- as many people have brought up --  
20 creating a sense of support and belonging in the  
21 community, and helping the community develop  
22 innovative strategies to treat [bell] relationship  
23 violence as a social problem; not a private family  
24 problem.

1  
2           So I'll finish in two seconds. In the  
3 course of the year of us piloting this program with  
4 middle school girls, we have done probably 40  
5 sessions with the same group of girls; this is a  
6 long-term involvement, and we're seeing reports  
7 coming out from our evaluators saying that a 100  
8 percent of the girls now feel proud to be a strong  
9 girl, 89 percent report being more confident saying  
10 no if they feel uncomfortable with something, 100  
11 percent learning what it means to set a boundary, 75  
12 percent reporting what it means to give consent.

13           We know we need to add a component -- I'm  
14 happy to meet some other people here on the panel --  
15 we know we need to add a component to work with young  
16 men and we're looking for networking and resources to  
17 really take this pilot program and go deeper into  
18 schools and neighborhoods to change the culture of  
19 violence. We've gotta send this message over and  
20 over until this culture of violence in our schools  
21 and neighborhoods is transformed into a culture of  
22 cooperation, nonviolence and hope. Thank you.

23           CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well thank you all  
24 for coming in; I really appreciate the fact that  
25 you're here to share your testimony and your

1 experiences. And we just have a couple of questions;  
2 for Michael Martinez first. Michael, you said that  
3 1,378 schools reported no bullying incidents,  
4 according to a June 2014 Daily News article. Do you  
5 know why that might be?  
6

7 MICHAEL MARTINEZ: Well personally I  
8 think that many of the principals do not want a bad  
9 name on themselves and maybe for their schools and I  
10 think many of the issues may have been resolved;  
11 however, they don't wish to report it; however, that  
12 is up for the DOE.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So that's a pretty  
14 astonishing number, actually, that -- rough math; I'm  
15 not really good with math anymore since I quit  
16 teaching -- [laugh] but I would say two-thirds of the  
17 system is not reporting any incidences of bullying at  
18 all and I just can't believe that that, you know, is  
19 accurate, that there isn't more bullying going on. I  
20 think part of the problem also, from my staff telling  
21 me, is that if the number is under a certain number,  
22 then they don't have to report it and that could also  
23 be part of the issue; so long as principals keep it  
24 under that certain number, then it doesn't come up as  
25 a number of incidents. So I think that's something



1  
2 that we really should look at because it's really not  
3 telling the truth, I don't think, of what we see;  
4 what I've actually experienced and from what I'm  
5 hearing from your testimony today is the real deal  
6 that's going on in the public schools. So thank you  
7 for bringing that number to my attention.

8           MICHAEL MARTINEZ: Thank you. And I wish  
9 to also say; my group as well, I know Council Member  
10 Maisel, even though he's not here right now; our  
11 group as well, we have developed worksheets for  
12 parents, teachers and students to know the signs of  
13 their being bullied or who is bullied. So if I can  
14 work with anybody, that'll be more pleasurable for  
15 everyone.

16           CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So Michael, I think  
17 when I first met you, you told me that you were  
18 bullied in school?

19           MICHAEL MARTINEZ: Yes I was. I...  
20 [interpose]

21           CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Do you know if those  
22 incidents were reported?

23           MICHAEL MARTINEZ: I don't think so,  
24 because I am from a Catholic school, however, when I  
25 was in a public school for summer school, I believe

1  
2 no incidents of bullying have been reported because  
3 when I first entered public school for summer school  
4 I heard that there was a rumor circling around  
5 because of a teenage pregnancy. So I think the  
6 schools themselves and the DOE need to work together.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: You're raising some  
8 really interesting issues here, actually that I did  
9 not think of and especially with regard to summer  
10 school; I don't know if they have to file or not in  
11 any of those incidents. So thank you; we're gonna  
12 look a little more further into that, okay?

13 MICHAEL MARTINEZ: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And Mr. O'Connor, I  
15 noticed that in the Coaching Boys Into Men, you spoke  
16 a little bit about the program actually reduces their  
17 own abusive behavior toward girls. I have to ask  
18 you; does the program address the needs of LGBT youth  
19 as well?

20 BRIAN O'CONNOR: Yes, it's... [crosstalk]

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And let me just tell  
22 you where I'm coming from also. We have a colleague  
23 here in the City Council, Council Member Corey  
24 Johnson from Greenwich Village, who was on the  
25 football team and he was bullied and actually

1  
2 contemplated suicide, from the other football  
3 players... [interpose]

4 BRIAN O'CONNOR: Uhm-hm.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: and so that's why it  
6 stands out and hits me so hard, knowing of Corey's  
7 experiences and actually, I think it was his coach,  
8 in the end, who changed and turned his life around;  
9 it was fortunate that he was able to recognize it.

10 BRIAN O'CONNOR: Uhm-hm. Well you bring  
11 up a really important point which I think a lot of  
12 folks who have spoken before me have also really  
13 intentionally said and also alluded to around the  
14 overlap too of bullying, of harassment, or intimate  
15 partner violence, etc. and you know these issues  
16 don't happen in isolation. What Coaching Boys Into  
17 Men does, particularly around the work of gender  
18 sensitization and talking about what healthy  
19 masculinity is and can be really focuses in on anti-  
20 homophobic slurs and you know, homophobia overall.  
21 In particular, the coaches' training, the training  
22 that coaches go through that precedes their  
23 implementation during the season, uses a series of  
24 teachable moments where those slurs in particular are

1  
2 kind of used in particular scenarios and role-plays  
3 with the coaches of what exactly they would do.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Good, 'cause I think  
5 it's really important 'cause I think sometimes  
6 there's a macho attitude in male high school sports  
7 that creates that environment, particularly in the  
8 sports area, homophobic attitudes. So thank you for  
9 that.

10 And then finally, Mr. Vargas, I know that  
11 you were here in the Council one other time where  
12 Council Member Levine introduced us to your program  
13 and I just wanna say thank you for again coming in  
14 and for providing us with information.

15 Now this program currently exists or is  
16 this a program that you're proposing?

17 ANTHONY VARGAS: So now many schools have  
18 implemented peer to peer mentoring programs, but in a  
19 smaller component of it. For example, my school has  
20 implemented a few peer to peer mentoring programs  
21 within our school; however, I was actually speaking  
22 with my principal about this and what I envision is  
23 having this in all New York City schools, but in a  
24 much larger scale, where there's more options for  
25 students to say... like there's more capacity; if a

1  
2 student wants to be mentored he can fit into the  
3 program; it's much more of a large capacity compared  
4 to now.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. And you  
6 also hit a very sensitive point for me, 'cause I had  
7 a friend whose mother was deaf and they used to tease  
8 him because of that as well, and so I think it  
9 manifests itself in many different ways, particularly  
10 around those who are disabled. So I want to just  
11 acknowledge your courage for coming in and hopefully  
12 we can get this resolution passed and we can invite  
13 you back to the Council again to celebrate that.

14 ANTHONY VARGAS: Most definitely. Thank  
15 you.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Absolutely. Thank  
17 you. And thank you all for coming in today. Council  
18 Member Mark Levine.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Thank you all.  
20 And Anthony, again, I'm really so proud of your  
21 leadership on this issue.

22 We know that support from guidance  
23 counselors and teachers and adults is really helpful  
24 in preventing bullying, but what is special about  
25 support from peers; why is that so impactful and why

1  
2 are you telling us this should be a focus of our  
3 efforts?

4 ANTHONY VARGAS: Well at the end of the  
5 day you know there might be a teacher and assistant  
6 principal or principal at the school that can help  
7 you out with an issued you might be having, but you  
8 still look at them as an authority figure and you  
9 might not have the same sense of trust to tell that  
10 authority figure how you feel versus a mentor,  
11 somebody that has gone through the same experience as  
12 you have. For example, my school, we have -- I was a  
13 10th grader and there was an 8th grader of which I  
14 was a mentor to; he would speak to me about issues he  
15 was having, not only academically, but personally  
16 like in his life and there was more of a sense of  
17 trust because I know some of the questions he would  
18 ask me about his personal life he wouldn't ask a  
19 teacher, because they wouldn't be able to relate to  
20 each other and at the end of the day they're an  
21 authority figure. So now it gives me a satisfaction  
22 that I know at the end of the day I was helping that  
23 student out and I'm in 12th grade now and I see him  
24 in the hallway as a 10th grader and he still  
25 remembers me; we still check in with each other and

1  
2 it's a great relationship that; I mean, at the end of  
3 the day I know I'm there for him and he's in a sense  
4 my little brother.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Thank you, thank  
6 you so much.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: 'Kay. Well thank you  
8 all for coming in; I really appreciate it. Thank  
9 you. [background comments]

10 Our next panel is Diana Feldman, from  
11 ENACT; Jared Fox from GLSEN; Deesha Narichania, Girls  
12 for Gender Equity -- hope I said your name right --  
13 Gurjot Kaur, from the Sikh Coalition. [background  
14 comments]

15 'Kay, so I'd like to swear you in; if  
16 you'll just raise your right hand. Do you solemnly  
17 swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth  
18 and nothing but the truth and to answer Council  
19 Member questions honestly? Thank you. And who would  
20 like to begin? Okay. [background comments] Just  
21 put that mic on and then...

22 DIANA FELDMAN: Hello.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah.

24 DIANA FELDMAN: Thank you so much for  
25 holding this hearing; I think it's extremely

1  
2 important and thank you for the opportunity of  
3 testifying.

4 My name is Diana Feldman; I am the  
5 founder and President of ENACT. We're a nonprofit  
6 organization that provides a unique and creative  
7 method of engaging youth in difficult discussions  
8 about challenging issues. For more than 25 years we  
9 have worked in the most underserved schools  
10 throughout the five boroughs of New York City where  
11 we teach life-saving, social/emotional skills;  
12 there's tremendous evidence about the outcome of our  
13 work. Kids from us are learning conflict resolution  
14 skills, attendance is improving; classroom climates  
15 are changing. Last year we were in 50 schools across  
16 the city in 25 Council Districts and since 2005 we've  
17 been in a total of 48 districts; we've served over  
18 150,000 youth, teachers and parents and the New York  
19 City schools have been called a resource of choice.

20 Our work gives a direct window into the  
21 lives of the students. We're in a unique position to  
22 hear their issues which kids confront every single  
23 day. Our engaging role play activities have been  
24 carefully developed. In our close partnerships with  
25 schools we hear and see every day the devastating



1 results of problems such as cyberbullying, violence  
2 in all forms, including dating violence. Addressing  
3 these issues as part of a school curriculum is more  
4 crucial today than ever due to the outstanding impact  
5 of social media. Kids are smarter than we give them  
6 credit for; they know exactly what is going on  
7 because they confront it every day. How do we know?  
8 Because they tell us, they tell us every day in the  
9 50 schools in which we work, but they can't face them  
10 alone; we as service providers cannot do it alone.  
11 We're unable to unearth the issues, deal and give  
12 voice to the problems; we help kids solve the  
13 problems within the school system, directly in the  
14 classrooms; we bring social workers into the schools  
15 as well for one on one counseling, but they keep  
16 arising. On a daily basis students respond to our  
17 questions about the key issues getting in the way of  
18 their learning. For example, we're funded for  
19 dropout prevention through the United Way programs  
20 and why do they tell us they're dropping out --  
21 bullying, cyberbullying. Through all and any means  
22 available, technology allows them to viciously bully  
23 one another online and to the unbeknownst parents in  
24 their lives who are confused by the technology,  
25

1  
2 cyberbullying is like terrorism, it creates a sense  
3 of fear that makes kids afraid to show up in school  
4 and their lives. [bell] Worse yet, parents do not  
5 know how to deal with it, even when they're aware of  
6 what happened. One parent -- and I heard that --  
7 recently said that cyberbullying is a force that's  
8 bigger than us because they don't understand it.

9 I won't go into it because of time, but  
10 recently we had a student that was also transferred  
11 out of her school; she was afraid, she was getting  
12 death threats; she was sexually harassed and we had  
13 to get her out of the school, get her to see our  
14 social workers and it became a major school and  
15 community issues. I'm calling upon this Council to  
16 pass these resolutions around violence and bullying;  
17 it's crucial, it's changing and affecting lives every  
18 single day; we don't have a moment to waste. Thank  
19 you.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Jared.

21 JARED FOX: Thank you to Members of the  
22 Education Committee for this opportunity to present  
23 testimony on Resolution Numbers 0149 and 0355 and for  
24 your leadership on keeping lesbian, gay, bisexual and  
25 transgender, LGBT youth safe and healthy.

1  
2 We are here today to testify in support  
3 of Resolutions 0149 and 0355 on behalf of GLSEN, the  
4 Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network. I have the  
5 pleasure of serving as the Chair of the Board of the  
6 New York City chapter and as a 14-year volunteer of  
7 the organization.

8 GLSEN is the leading national educational  
9 organization focused on ensuring schools are safe for  
10 all students, regardless of sexual orientation or  
11 gender identity; we've been doing this for 25 years.

12 We believe in building an environment  
13 where all young people are valued and respected and  
14 as such underscore the importance of the continued  
15 implementation of the State's Bullying Prevention  
16 Law, the Dignity for All Students Act, to ensure that  
17 all public school students are in a safe and  
18 affirmative environment, free from discrimination,  
19 harassment and bullying.

20 GLSEN's research speaks to the student  
21 experience in New York. Findings from the GLSEN 2013  
22 National School Climate Survey, released just two  
23 weeks ago, demonstrate that New York schools were not  
24 safe for many lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender  
25 youth; secondary school students specifically. Many

1  
2 LGBT students in New York did not have access to  
3 important school resources, such as curriculum that  
4 is inclusive of LGBT people in history; in addition,  
5 LGBT students did not have access to in-school  
6 resources and supports, such as supportive educators.  
7 According to the survey, only 22 percent of students  
8 attended a school with a comprehensive anti-bullying  
9 or harassment policy that included specific  
10 protections on sexual orientation or gender identity.

11           School-based supports such as  
12 comprehensive bullying and harassment policies,  
13 school personnel who are supportive of LGBT students,  
14 gay-straight alliances and LGBT-inclusive curriculum  
15 can positively affect school climate. Findings from  
16 the survey demonstrate that students attending  
17 schools with these resources and supports report more  
18 positive school experiences, including lower  
19 victimization and absenteeism and higher academic  
20 achievement. Given the high percentage of LGBT  
21 students in New York who experience harassment at  
22 school and the limited access to key resources and  
23 supports that can have a positive effect on their  
24 school experiences, it is critical that school  
25 leaders, education policymakers and other individuals

1  
2 who are obligated to provide safe learning  
3 environments take the following steps: Implement  
4 DASA, the State's comprehensive anti-bullying and  
5 harassment policy; support student clubs commonly  
6 known as Gay-Straight Alliances; provide professional  
7 development of school staff and students on LGBT  
8 issues, and increase student access to LGBT-inclusive  
9 curricular resources.

10           These actions can move us forward in a  
11 future where all students in New York will have the  
12 opportunity to learn and succeed in school regardless  
13 of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression.  
14 Thank you for supporting this issue as well as your  
15 tireless efforts to support our youth.

16           CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next  
17 please.

18           DEESHA NARICHANIA: Good afternoon New  
19 York City Council Members. My name is Deesha  
20 Narichania and I have been working in the anti-  
21 violence movement for 15 years. Right now I am Girls  
22 for Gender Equity's Director of Programs, where I've  
23 been serving for three years.

24           Girls for Gender Equity is an  
25 intergenerational organization committed to the

1  
2 physical, psychological, social and economic  
3 development of girls and women. GGE serves 600 youth  
4 annually and has provided our gender violence lens to  
5 education, youth-focused organizations and  
6 policymakers across the nation.

7           We are also a member of Advocates for  
8 Safe and Empowering Relationships. ASER is a  
9 coalition of New York City organizations that  
10 partners with youth to advocate for policies and  
11 practices that enable safety and freedom from  
12 violence. GGE and ASER represent thousands of New  
13 York youth who have been impacted by violence and  
14 bullying and who rely on adults and institutions to  
15 create conditions in which they can thrive and  
16 succeed.

17           I am here today to ask you to accept all  
18 of the proposed resolutions and to not let New York  
19 City's young people continue to be harmed by violence  
20 and unsafety. This is such a pressing issue that the  
21 U.S. Conference of Mayors have declared youth  
22 violence to be a public health crisis.

23           In 2008, Girls for Gender Equity  
24 conducted student-led research of 1,189 students,  
25 grades 6-12, from over 90 public schools and CBOs in

1  
2 New York City asking students -- What is the impact  
3 of sexual harassment on students in New York City  
4 schools? Seventy point five (70.5) percent of New  
5 York City public school students observed sexual  
6 teasing in their school, 67 percent of the students  
7 reported being sexually harassed and 31.2 percent  
8 observed pressure for sex or sexual activity, which  
9 doesn't account for sexual pressure and coercion  
10 which happened in private.

11           Students who had experienced sexual  
12 harassment said that it negatively impacted their  
13 ability to focus in school due to depression, fear,  
14 insecurity and feeling violated. One student wrote -  
15 -- "My grades dropped and I was always depressed."  
16 Another -- "I was scared to come to school." When  
17 asked if schools should provide more help for its  
18 victims, 89 percent of females and 76 percent of  
19 males said yes. You may find further information  
20 about these findings in GGE's publication, *Hey*  
21 *Shorty: A Guide to Combating Sexual Harassment and*  
22 *Violence in Schools and on the Streets.*

23           As staff, interns, youth organizers with  
24 a variety of general expressions, we at GGE also know  
25 that these issues are not limited to sex-gender [sic]

1  
2 girls. As Jared mentioned, for years the Gay,  
3 Lesbian and Straight Education Network's reports on  
4 LGBT youth experiences in schools have revealed that  
5 trans and gender nonconforming youth receive the  
6 highest rates of sexual harassment and bullying of  
7 all students.

8           While I'm speaking as an advocate for the  
9 youth I work with, I also have personal experience  
10 with this subject. I sometime wonder what could have  
11 looked different from my life had my school offered  
12 violence prevention education, including on  
13 challenging gender, racial and immigrant stereotypes.  
14 Would I have been as vulnerable to bullying peers?  
15 [bell] coercive men, an abusive girlfriend and the  
16 manipulative professor? Could I have avoided  
17 depression, [background comment] an eating disorder  
18 and suicidality? We can't ever really know, but the  
19 above-cited research, among others, supports my  
20 hypothesis that if my family and community were able  
21 to more proactively address sexism, racism, consent  
22 and bullying, I could have been a more empowered and  
23 civically engaged individual -- [background comments]  
24 I'm almost done.



1  
2           The Prevention Institute has demonstrated  
3 in their report that most violence is not inevitable.  
4 They found that cities with more coordination,  
5 communication and attention to preventing violence  
6 have achieved lower violence rates and that schools  
7 can reduce violence by 15 percent in just six months  
8 through universal school-based violence prevention  
9 efforts.

10           I share these stories not to win your  
11 sympathy, but rather your vote to ensure that New  
12 York City's young people are supported in their  
13 educational and athletic communities.

14           I am in awe of the work I get to be a  
15 part of every day, programs and policies that weren't  
16 available to me as a young person and which bolster  
17 the health and happiness of hundreds of young people  
18 every year. Still, organizations like GGE are  
19 limited in what we can accomplish without strong  
20 mandate and implementation measures from the  
21 Department of Education. We weave anti-violence  
22 programming into after-school curricula, but this is  
23 not useful if violence abounds during the school day.  
24 I, along with hundreds of New York City students who  
25 either could be victimized within their school and

1  
2 athletics teams or protected empowered hope that you  
3 will vote yes on the group of resolutions on the  
4 table this afternoon. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next  
6 please.

7 GURJOT KAUR: Good afternoon. My name is  
8 Gurjot Kaur and with a name like that, you bet I know  
9 what bullying is. I'm a Senior Staff Attorney at The  
10 Sikh Coalition. I'd like to thank Chairman Dromm and  
11 Council Member Weprin for their long-time support on  
12 these issues and the Committee on Education for  
13 giving us an opportunity to provide testimony today.

14 The Sikh Coalition is the nation's  
15 largest Sikh civil rights organization. Since our  
16 founding on the night of 9/11, we've been committed  
17 to ensuring the civil rights and liberties of all  
18 Americans, including Sikh Americans. Unfortunately,  
19 since the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the Sikh  
20 community has been particularly vulnerable to hate  
21 crimes, including murder and discrimination because  
22 of our religious appearance, which includes a  
23 religiously-mandated turban and unshorn hair. The  
24 discrimination has been largely based on a mistaken  
25 perception that Sikhs are affiliated with Al Qaeda or

1 the Taliban. Ironically, these Sikh articles of  
2 faith actually represent love, equality and living a  
3 life committed to justice and selfless community  
4 service, but have become targets of hate and Sikh  
5 school children have not escaped this backlash. In  
6 our most recent national report on school bullying,  
7 we found that over 50 percent of Sikh school children  
8 experience bullying and even more alarming, 67  
9 percent of turbaned Sikh school children experience  
10 bias-based bullying; this is more than double the  
11 national rate.  
12

13           These high numbers mean that for many  
14 Sikh students across the country and in New York City  
15 our schools are not a safe space for learning and  
16 development, but instead a place of sheer terror. So  
17 one of our recommendations over the years has been to  
18 incorporate mandatory comprehensive anti-bullying  
19 instruction in New York City public schools. The  
20 need for this preventative tool cannot be overstated.  
21 We've consistently found that schools that do not  
22 engage in anti-bullying efforts are more likely to  
23 experience problems with bullying. We've also found  
24 that schools that implement Sikh awareness programs  
25 with Sikh bullying examples and explanations, in

1  
2 addition to anti-bullying instruction; in other  
3 words, programs that demystify the turban and the  
4 religion, have greatly assisted in diminishing cases  
5 of school bullying. These sustained and targeted  
6 educational efforts work, whereas these half measures  
7 that we're currently seeing don't. In our previous  
8 report analyzing the chancellor's Regulation A-832,  
9 we expressed concern about the DOE's failure to fully  
10 implement the regulation, but what we discovered is  
11 that implementing the regulation alone was not enough  
12 in diminishing incidents of school bullying, but it  
13 did help in increasing the number of students who  
14 reported bullying violations to their school.

15           Because our findings indicated that  
16 putting up Respect For All posters without this sort  
17 of sustained and comprehensive training didn't  
18 decrease bullying, we recommended more vigorous anti-  
19 bullying instruction. I'd like to share a quick  
20 statement by a Sikh student; he says: "When I moved  
21 to America, it was just like they looked at us and  
22 called us names like terrorist and stuff like that or  
23 go back to your country. I was in 2nd grade when it  
24 started and it just started to get worse. I got a  
25 book about the Sikh religion and my articles of faith

1  
2 and I gave it to one of my teachers; he got the whole  
3 school together and actually read that book out loud;  
4 that prevented bullying for the [bell] remaining four  
5 years I went to that school." I just -- may I have  
6 couple more seconds of your time?

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Uhm-hm. Yes, please.

8 GURJOT KAUR: Sure. Recently, in a  
9 complaint that we filed with the Department of  
10 Justice in Georgia, where a turbaned Sikh student was  
11 physically assaulted and verbally harassed, it  
12 resulted in the ensuing consent decree. What I wanna  
13 share about that consent decree is that it  
14 implemented anti-bullying training specifically about  
15 post 9/11 backlash and Islamaphobia faced by Sikhs,  
16 Muslims, Arabs and other South Asian students. I'm  
17 also pleased to announce today that DOJ released a  
18 second settlement agreement with this school that  
19 implements these preventative measures district-wide;  
20 that means this school district, DeKalb County School  
21 District in Georgia is required to provide all  
22 100,000 students and staff training on post 9/11  
23 backlash issues. So this is pivotal in diminishing  
24 training; we also support the cyberbullying  
25 resolution, Asian American students report being

1  
2 cyber bullied at higher rates and we also support the  
3 mentoring programs offered by Mr. Vargas and others.  
4 Thank you so much for your time today and for your  
5 effort and work on these issues.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well thank you so  
7 much for your testimony. I'm wondering, having heard  
8 the last piece of your testimony, whether or not it's  
9 going to take a full-fledged lawsuit to force the New  
10 York City Department of Education to do what it's  
11 supposed to be doing in the first place, and this has  
12 been a major issue; for 22 years I've been trying to  
13 get them to move on this issue and we've seen very  
14 little action and I appreciate your word also where  
15 you put in your testimony, you said, "in other words,  
16 programs that demystify the turban and the religion  
17 have greatly assisted in diminishing cases of school  
18 bullying. These sustained and targeted educational  
19 efforts work, whereas half measures," which are sadly  
20 the typical approach, do not and I couldn't agree  
21 with you more.

22 I wanna thank the Sikh Coalition also for  
23 all the work that you did in terms of support for  
24 DASA on the state level; I think we could have even  
25 had some legislation excluding the LGBT community,

1  
2 had it not been for the Sikh Coalition's insistence  
3 that that community be included in there, and I think  
4 that ultimately the way that we win the battle  
5 against all isms is by sticking together in this  
6 effort. So I wanted to say that to you right up  
7 front.

8 I had an incident in my classroom where a  
9 young boy was wearing a turban, after school, off of  
10 school property, I was going to the deli as I was  
11 leaving school and he was going home, and another boy  
12 ran up and pulled his turban off of his head and  
13 called him an Osama, obviously related to 9/11 as  
14 well, and it was just really, oh my gosh, terrible  
15 for me, even as an adult just to see this go on and  
16 how horrible an incident that was, but to be honest  
17 with you, I had no curriculum or anything to do to be  
18 able to try to fix that situation and I think that's  
19 still lacking in the school and as a teacher, I also  
20 had to begin to learn some of the reasons why people  
21 wear the turban or women wear veils or the holidays  
22 that we celebrate, Eid and Diwali and things like  
23 that, which is why I'm also a supporter of those  
24 school holidays coming in, because I think it would  
25 be a way to go about teaching tolerance as well. But

1  
2 there's just so much more that I think that the DOE  
3 has to do and so I really appreciate your testimony  
4 and coming in today.

5 I wanna ask Mr. Fox a question though,  
6 and maybe somebody else in the panel may know as  
7 well. With reporting of incidents under DASA, what  
8 is the difference between, or is there a difference  
9 between reporting incidents of discrimination or  
10 bullying against LGBT youth versus others?

11 JARED FOX: It's a great question, it's  
12 something that the implementation committee for DASA  
13 is still trying to figure out what that looks like.  
14 Different school districts using student information  
15 systems report incidences and aggregate and by school  
16 basis, and then also for those affiliate groups that  
17 DASA enumerates. New York City, unfortunately,  
18 hasn't made it clear how they're going to report to  
19 the state the DASA-level data that is going to be  
20 requested.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And I wonder if a  
22 large part of that doesn't go back to this whole  
23 issue of LGBT again and sending the wrong message. I  
24 mean I think that part of it is also the sensitivity  
25 that we must use, because if you identify LGBT youth



1  
2 as being LGBT and it goes back to the parent or  
3 there's follow-up or whatever, that's a concern, but  
4 I also think that it's used sometimes as an excuse by  
5 the DOE not to collect that data and I have been a  
6 proponent of that and a proponent of data collection  
7 for our LGBT youth because I think that in order to  
8 begin to really look at this issue we need to have  
9 those numbers. So... [interpose]

10 JARED FOX: If I can say one thing...

11 [crosstalk]

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.

13 JARED FOX: I also wanna underscore the  
14 cyberbullying initiative, [background comment] that  
15 was a recent enumeration into DASA, and one fact from  
16 GLSEN research is that LGBT students are three times  
17 more likely to be bullied or harassed online. So 42  
18 percent as opposed to 15 percent of the general  
19 population; it's a pretty staggering statistic, and  
20 we also know that many LGBT youth turn to the  
21 internet for support and resources that they might  
22 not otherwise find in their school, district or even  
23 their family.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: In the very early  
25 days of my activism I went down to the Equal

1  
2 Opportunity office at the DOE and I asked them how  
3 many incidents of anti-gay discrimination they had  
4 and for the whole system they had two. Well I can't  
5 believe that, you know that was 1992 or '93,  
6 something like that. But anyway, be that as it may,  
7 I just wanted to get those facts on the record and  
8 say thank you to all of you for coming in; I  
9 appreciate it, ENACT; everybody else. Thank you.

10 JARED FOX: Thank you.

11 [background comments]

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, we've been  
13 joined by Council Member Gentile from Brooklyn; thank  
14 you for being with us. Now I'd like to call up the  
15 next panel -- Erica Amavile [sic]... [background  
16 comments] Amavale [sic], Amavale at Stop Slut-Shaming  
17 Coalition... [background comment] Shaming, I'm sorry.  
18 What did I say? [background comment] I'm sorry --  
19 Shaming Coalition, New York City Lab; Sienna Marie  
20 Sharar [sp?], same organization, Stop Slut-Shaming  
21 Coalition; I think it's Irene Tappert [sp?], Stop  
22 Slut-Shaming Coalition; Sarah Gargano [sp?], Stop  
23 Slut-Shaming Coalition also, and Megan Boyle Lynch  
24 from the same organization. [background comment]  
25 I'm gonna ask you all to raise your right hand so I

1  
2 can swear you in. Do you all solemnly swear or  
3 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing  
4 but the truth and to answer Council Member questions  
5 honestly? [background comments] Okay, very good.  
6 Who would like to start? Okay, very good.

7 ERICA MOBLEY: Hi, my name is Erica  
8 Mobley [sp?]; I'm a junior at the NYC Lab School for  
9 Collaborative Studies and I am one of the co-leaders  
10 of the Stop Slut-Shaming Coalition at our school,  
11 which works in correlation with the NYC Stop Slut  
12 Girl Coalition.

13 We are here today, me and my other group  
14 members and our teacher adviser, are here today in  
15 favor of this legislation being discussed today and  
16 we find it very important, but we also feel that  
17 there is another topic that is being unaddressed here  
18 that is very important for this cause.

19 One of the topics we are gathered to  
20 discuss here today is sexual abuse amongst teens and  
21 making it mandatory to create age-appropriate  
22 education for all public middle school and high  
23 school students. This will create a safer  
24 environment for both myself and every other student  
25 in the public school system and I think it is very

1  
2 hypocritical of the Department of Education to only  
3 advocate for better sex education when its own  
4 behavioral contract includes a dress code that  
5 encourages the cultural sexual abuse we are trying to  
6 fight here today.

7           It might not do so outrightly, but the  
8 implications of the language use in effect do. In  
9 the first page of the paper that we handed out you  
10 will find a dress code and in the dress code it  
11 states that any suggestive clothing, including skinny  
12 tank tops, midriffs, short shorts or miniskirts are  
13 not allowed to be worn by students at school. This  
14 dress code specifically targets girls and before you  
15 say but wait, it doesn't specifically refer to girls,  
16 it is implied. The clothes listed are those  
17 typically associated to be worn by girls and I'm  
18 pretty sure that the writer was not thinking of boys  
19 wearing short shorts or miniskirt to school when they  
20 wrote it. This part of the dress code is intended to  
21 get girls to stop wearing revealing clothes, which we  
22 all know is a polite way of saying slutty so that it  
23 won't be distracting to others. The others in the  
24 statement are clearly boys, who, based on the  
25 implications of the statement, are slaves [sic] to

1  
2 the hormonal frenzy they get from seeing a girl's  
3 belly button or shoulder. So there are two things  
4 wrong with this dress code; the first being that as  
5 bunch of adults sexualizing the body of underage  
6 girls as young as 12 years old and the second being  
7 that it normalizes [sic] victim-blaming.

8           From a young age girls' bodies are  
9 sexualized or scandalized by the media by people in  
10 their everyday lives and by their school. By  
11 regulating what girls wear and deeming certain  
12 outfits slutty, you are inherently sexualizing the  
13 bodies of underage girls and bullying them for their  
14 clothes and bodies, which is another topic we're  
15 talking about today.

16           Think about it, say that there are two  
17 girls wearing a shirt with a plunging neckline; one  
18 girl is flat-chested and the other girl has a large  
19 chest. The flat-chested girl wears her shirt all day  
20 long and has nothing said to her about it because  
21 she's not showing anything; meanwhile, the girl with  
22 the larger chest wears the exact same shirt and she's  
23 told to put a sweater on over [bell] it -- I'll be  
24 quick] -- and she's told to put a sweater on or a  
25 shirt over it because it's too inappropriate for

1 school. The large-chested girl is not allowed to  
2 wear the same shirt as the other girl because she has  
3 a different body than her. Keep in mind that girls  
4 from a young age have been taught to be ashamed of  
5 their bodies and this is just a continuation of that  
6 body-shaming. It's humiliating to be told in front  
7 of your peers that your outfit is too slutty for  
8 school; it is uncomfortable and creepy to be told by  
9 your adult teacher that you, a minor, look slutty and  
10 therefore should be condemned for it.  
11

12 The idea behind this dress code is to  
13 keep boys from getting distracted because seeing part  
14 of a bra strap turns them into sexual deviants. Let  
15 me tell you something, a couple of weeks ago my  
16 acting teacher asked the boys in my acting class if  
17 they got distracted by seeing girls' thighs or bra  
18 straps; their response -- no, duh -- because as it  
19 turns out, teenage boys are fully capable of  
20 controlling themselves, but by implementing a dress  
21 code for this reason, you not only downgrade them to  
22 impulsive cavemen, but you also put all the blame on  
23 the girl for the boy's behavior. It is not my  
24 responsibility to ensure that I am not distracting  
25 boys from their school work with my shirt; that is

1  
2 his problem, but certainly not mine; it takes time  
3 away that should be focused on learning in a  
4 comfortable and professional environment.

5           So in conclusion, by implementing this  
6 dress code we are teaching that girls are responsible  
7 for all of the reactions that other people have in  
8 regards to their bodies that aren't inherently sexual  
9 at all. We are teaching boys that they are  
10 distracted because of a girl; it is not their fault  
11 for having basic self-control over themselves, but  
12 the girl's fault for having a body. We are teaching  
13 boys that they shouldn't have to learn how to control  
14 themselves because it's more important that we  
15 regulate the bodies of girls starting in middle  
16 school. We are teaching girls that if a boy is  
17 staring at them in an uncomfortable manner that it is  
18 their fault for dressing like a slut. If they are  
19 getting uncomfortable comments from boys, that they  
20 have to stop dressing so slutty; if you get raped at  
21 a party, well then sucks for you, but what did you  
22 expect dressing like a slut. We are  
23 institutionalizing this harmful culture that we live  
24 in and have lived in since we were children. The DOE  
25 behavioral contract makes everything that we are

1  
2 discussing here today effectively useless because at  
3 its core, Department of Education is still going to  
4 be enforcing these ideas that work against the  
5 awareness and prevention programs. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

7 [background comments]

8 SARAH GARGANO: Hi, I'm Sarah Gargano and  
9 I am a member of our school's Stop Slut-Shaming  
10 Coalition Club. So I'm gonna share a personal  
11 experience that I've had with the dress code.

12 My experience with the dress code isn't  
13 an extreme one, but I'd say the fact that it isn't  
14 considered extreme in our society says enough. I'll  
15 always remember this one time in middle school when a  
16 teacher confronted me in front of other students and  
17 teachers and told me that my shirt was too revealing  
18 and that she wanted me to change. Her public shaming  
19 of my outfit and body was under the defense of the  
20 school dress code; I argued with the teacher at  
21 first, because my outfit didn't seem too revealing to  
22 me and I hated feeling out of control in something  
23 concerning my body, but I realized her authoritative  
24 power took precedence over any of my words, so to my  
25 further embarrassment, I resorted to crying. At the



1  
2 time I felt ashamed and hurt and I knew something  
3 about the situation just wasn't fair, but I couldn't  
4 find the words to explain why. Looking back on it  
5 now I realize what made me feel so unsettled. This  
6 teacher's intention was not to abide by the rules in  
7 order to create a better society or do the right  
8 thing or the good thing, her intention was to  
9 humiliate me, which worked. Almost every girl I know  
10 has had some kind of powerless experience like mine  
11 with dress coding in their teenage years. Teaching  
12 people that female bodies are inherently sexual from  
13 such a young age perpetuates the idea that making  
14 girls feel ashamed of their bodies is okay and that  
15 girls' sexual worth is their most defining feature.  
16 It also tells me that making sure my male peers  
17 aren't distracted by the sexual connotations of my  
18 body is more important than my education. Planting  
19 the idea that objectifying women is normal into 6th  
20 graders' brains leads to the so prominent and  
21 disgusting rape culture that is particularly common  
22 among college campuses today. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next  
24 please.

25 [background comment]

1  
2 IRENE TAPPERT: My name is Irene Tapper;  
3 I am also part of this coalition at our school.

4 So what can be done to fix this? We  
5 recommend making changes to the dress code and taking  
6 out any section about suggestive clothing. Instead  
7 of saying what clothing is not appropriate to wear to  
8 school, say what is. Say that students should wear  
9 clothing that they feel comfortable working in. Say  
10 that they should wear clothing that helps promote a  
11 workplace environment; not only are these gender-  
12 neutral terms that are not shaming of girls in any  
13 way, but they also promote doing work, which is the  
14 main concern that dress codes claim they deal with.  
15 Students should be trusted to make decisions for  
16 themselves when it comes to how they dress for the  
17 work-centric environment that school is meant to  
18 promote. After all, part of going to school is  
19 learning how to be independent and deciding how to  
20 dress part of this independence. The school dress  
21 code is bullying students and undermining their  
22 ability to not only control themselves, but to make  
23 choices that we all have the right to make. By  
24 promoting slut-shaming and pointing out these so-  
25 called infringements, teachers are moving beyond the

1  
2 learning environment and into accusations that are  
3 only enforcing the problems that you are here to  
4 address today. Any dress code should utilize  
5 positive language and gender-neutral terms to help  
6 create an environment that allows all students to  
7 feel empowered to learn. Girls have been taught to  
8 be ashamed of their bodies because of the negative  
9 language used in these dress codes, thus the DOE  
10 should try to be positive when talking about bodies  
11 because it is important to promote a culture in which  
12 we have ownership of our bodies and therefore are not  
13 constantly ashamed. It is a necessity that schools  
14 begin teaching students to stand up to slut-shaming  
15 rather than continuing to make them feel that they  
16 must be ashamed of themselves.

17 MEGAN LYNCH: Hi, I'm Megan Lynch; I am  
18 the faculty advisor for these impressive young people  
19 and I am so proud of them for the testimony that they  
20 have provided today and I support them in their  
21 desire to have this objectionable language removed  
22 from the dress code, but I also know that many of my  
23 very well-intentioned colleagues will disagree and I  
24 want to address them.

25

1  
2 This is my 12th year teaching in the DOE;  
3 for the majority of these years I enforce the dress  
4 code. I have directed students to cover up, borrow a  
5 sweater or sweatpants and I have done so with the  
6 firm belief that I was helping them. I grew up in  
7 New York City public schools and starting in the 7th  
8 grade I rode the subway alone to and from school and  
9 I have experienced what it is to be a young girl,  
10 young woman and an adult woman in this city. I  
11 experienced street harassment, catcalls and  
12 uncomfortable stares from strangers from a very young  
13 age. I also, like many young women, experienced  
14 sexual assault twice; once on the subway in the 9th  
15 grade and once on a tree-lined street in Park Slope  
16 after taking my SAT II in the 12th grade. I was too  
17 scared to scream both times and too ashamed to tell  
18 anyone afterwards. So when I enforced the dress  
19 code, I hoped that I was protecting my students; I  
20 hoped that I could spare them the range of grotesque  
21 experiences that I went through as a young woman in  
22 this city. What I did not realize is that by  
23 enforcing the dress code I was contributing to the  
24 culture that created the conditions under which I was  
25 harassed and assaulted; that the dress code was

1  
2 teaching girls that the most important thing about  
3 them is their body, that they are responsible for the  
4 sexual behavior of young men and that their bodies,  
5 above all else, are sexual objects. It is terrifying  
6 to know that 1 in 4 women are sexually assaulted in  
7 college. As schools, we want to do everything we can  
8 to keep our students safe now and to prepare them to  
9 be safe in college. So we teach girls how to use a  
10 buddy system, never put a drink down, to drink out of  
11 bottles with lids, how to hold their keys when they  
12 are walking down that street in the dark and we teach  
13 them how to dress to be safe. We do this all out of  
14 an instinct to protect, but what we are teaching is  
15 dangerous. Instead of challenging the culture we are  
16 teaching girls to accept it and to adapt to it.

17           Instead of teaching girls how to prevent  
18 themselves from being assaulted and asking girls to  
19 take on the responsibility of regulating the sexual  
20 behavior of boys, we need to start talking about the  
21 real roots of the problem. We need to teach young  
22 men and women that the only thing that could be  
23 construed as suggestive is expressed consent. We  
24 need to have uncomfortable conversations about the  
25 misogyny that is present in every aspect of our lives

1  
2 and we need a dress code that encourages gender  
3 equality and respect for all.

4 As you make your recommendations to the  
5 DOE, I hope that you will encourage them to bring  
6 their behavioral contracts in line with the kind of  
7 safe, inclusive environment that the resolutions you  
8 present today are so clearly trying to build. Thank  
9 you for your time and your consideration.

10 [background comments]

11 SIENNA MARIE SHARAR: Hi, I'm Sienna  
12 Marie Sharar [sp?]; I'm with the same club and I got  
13 to the same school [bell]; I'm a junior. I'd like to  
14 speak more to the topic of intimate partner abuse, in  
15 relation specifically to sex education provided by  
16 high schools.

17 In the past few years it has become  
18 obvious that American teenagers and young adults  
19 require more comprehensive, honest sex education.  
20 With the rise of "hook-up" culture and the  
21 consequential umpteenth sexual revolution, my  
22 generation not only requires, but deserves more than  
23 condoms on bananas and the ubiquitous horror stories  
24 of STIs.

1  
2 A recent Guttmacher Institute analysis  
3 revealed that only 18 states require teachers to  
4 provide information about contraception and 37 states  
5 reportedly allow for medically inaccurate sex  
6 education; New York being one of them. Sexual  
7 relationships and encounters are an important part of  
8 almost every young adult's life and it is even more  
9 important that they are handled safely. We all need  
10 to be educated properly, without bias and without  
11 judgment; it could literally save lives.

12 Sex education should include a wide  
13 manner of topics; not only should we be taught about  
14 the procreative functions of the body, but we should  
15 learn about safe sex that not only caters to straight  
16 couples, but the LGBTQ youth who are also undoubtedly  
17 a part of the public education system. We should  
18 learn about the attributes of a healthy relationship,  
19 since the vast majority of teenagers will date before  
20 they graduate high school. The failure to provide  
21 any information whatsoever on relationships and abuse  
22 is one I would particularly like to focus on.

23 When the topic of intimate partner  
24 violence arises, most people tend to think of a  
25 situation along the lines of a woman being physically

1  
2 abused by her male partner; sometimes the male  
3 partner has alcoholism; sometimes there's a crying  
4 child involved; sometimes the woman reaches out for  
5 help. The situation has time and time again been  
6 presented by the media as the definition of an  
7 abusive relationship, which is not only unfair, but  
8 extremely harmful. Society seems to have a case of  
9 tunnel vision when dealing with abusive  
10 relationships; this is the notion that I grew up  
11 believing.

12           Of course, the situation considered to be  
13 the embodiment of abuse is just the tip of the  
14 terrifying iceberg that really is intimate partner  
15 violence. It was only recently that I learned of  
16 emotional and mental abuse, verbal abuse and sexual  
17 abuse; it was two years ago that I learned it could  
18 be applied to teenage relationships. I learned this  
19 from a combination of the internet and personal  
20 experiences. It is hard enough to handle  
21 mistreatment from a boyfriend or girlfriend and it is  
22 horrifying when you've been given absolutely no  
23 resources to help you with. It would be easy for  
24 public schools to shrug and say that what students do  
25 on their own time is not the school's business, but



1  
2 it would also be incredibly hypocritical. Sex  
3 education, contraceptives and support for victims of  
4 abuse should be given like school lunch; it is not  
5 safe to assume that every student is given healthy  
6 meals at home, so the school provides breakfast and  
7 lunch just in case. Just so, it is not safe to  
8 assume that every teenager has supportive parents who  
9 have educated them about sex, consent, given them  
10 birth control or checked upon their relationships to  
11 make sure everything was okay and healthy.

12 Unfortunately, most people my age that I know seem to  
13 be self-educated on most of these topics and while we  
14 are not too young to be dealing with them in our  
15 lives... [bell] sorry; I'll only be a minute longer..  
16 while we are not too young to be dealing with them in  
17 our lives, we are almost definitely too young to be  
18 dealing with them with absolutely no support from the  
19 adults that surround us in our lives. I'd like to  
20 think that had my school given me adequate  
21 information about sex that actually spoke to my life  
22 and didn't make me feel guilty I would have less  
23 confusion. I would like to think that had my school  
24 given me proper advice on healthy relationships that  
25 I would... [background comment] sorry... I'd like to

1  
2 think that had my school given me proper advice on  
3 healthy relationships I would not have let a  
4 boyfriend whittle my self-esteem down for almost a  
5 year. I would like to think that schools everywhere  
6 can take up the slack and start to address the real  
7 problem, because the real problem is not sex in  
8 relationships, it's the failure of the schools to  
9 treat students maturely and prepare them, whether  
10 they choose to have sex or not. Thank you for your  
11 time and consideration.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well thank you; this  
13 has been very powerful and wonderful testimony and I  
14 wanna congratulate all of you and especially your  
15 teacher for having come in with you today and really  
16 prepared for this hearing, and I could relate to an  
17 awful lot of what you said and I wrote down just some  
18 thoughts. There's kind of a weird situation with the  
19 behavior code, right? I never, as a teacher, really  
20 kind of enforced it, but I saw cases where girls were  
21 told to cover up, particularly like on graduation  
22 day, and one time this girl wasn't allowed to go to  
23 graduation because she had what some administrator  
24 probably thought was too "sexy" of a top and she's 9  
25 years old; you know what I mean, and like how is that

1  
2 sexy? So that was really a moment that I will always  
3 remember and she was crying and it was just terrible  
4 and I would imagine that for that girl that's always  
5 remained in her mind, you know and really damaged  
6 that child, but I was powerless to do anything about  
7 it, 'cause it was the administrators who decided to  
8 do that. And sometimes our parents don't even know  
9 that they can advocate on behalf of their children,  
10 particularly because when you see it in the behavior  
11 code here, and what's really interesting is that this  
12 is like something just for what people might call  
13 suggestive clothing probably mostly for girls; I  
14 think somebody mentioned it before. But I would  
15 think there might be some suggestive clothing for  
16 boys or some people would find sexy clothing for boys  
17 and that's not mentioned in here, so either the  
18 person who wrote this was dumb or I don't know what  
19 they're thinking really, to be honest with you. So I  
20 think that it requires a whole change of mindset, and  
21 let me tell you what I mean by that also. When I  
22 first came out as being openly gay and was fighting  
23 in 1973 or '74, 'cause I'm very old now, the argument  
24 used to be used that we couldn't have simple gay  
25 rights laws in New York City, because if we were to

1  
2 be in a locker room, we might find other men too  
3 attractive and attack them or something, you know, or  
4 we couldn't be in a firehouse because we might find  
5 those other men so attractive -- first of all, why  
6 should it only be men, that's one question -- but  
7 it's kind of a little bit of a flip on the argument  
8 that you're giving for also having girls cover up,  
9 because supposedly these heterosexual men, I guess or  
10 something, are so unable to either resist my passes  
11 at them or unable to control themselves because of  
12 the clothing that you may be wearing. So but it is  
13 the re... and I don't like to use the word victim, but  
14 a re-victimization of the victim when you see this  
15 type of thing, but I know you're strong young women  
16 and you will not be victimized. And then finally, I  
17 just had an incident maybe two months ago when I went  
18 to visit a friend in prison and I couldn't believe  
19 it, 'cause my sister's very modest and she always  
20 wears shirts up to here, but I guess it was a little  
21 sheer, I think that's what you call it, and they made  
22 her cover up, they made her put on a tee shirt on top  
23 of it; again, because I guess men just would go crazy  
24 or something, I don't understand it really; I mean  
25 I'm gay, so I don't get it, you know. What can I

1  
2 tell you, you know. But it does require that  
3 mindset, so it's young women like you who will help  
4 to change that mindset and I really thank you for  
5 coming in and providing testimony today. So thank  
6 you. [background comments]

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Just a quick  
8 question. You mentioned that students should be  
9 trusted to make decisions for themselves when it  
10 comes to the dress code; when it comes to how they  
11 dress for the workcentric environment that school is  
12 meant to promote, and while that may be so, it's not  
13 a failsafe. What happens when some student, by some  
14 standard, and I don't know what standard that would  
15 be, doesn't dress for the workcentric environment?

16 IRENE TAPPERT: I think what we have been  
17 talking about specifically in our club and what we've  
18 been trying to promote in our school is that part of  
19 the issue -- and this again relates to the discussion  
20 on how to teach kids about sexual violence -- is  
21 like, the reason that there are -- this is hard to  
22 answer -- the reason that there are these dress codes  
23 is because of this culture that exists and I think  
24 that by trusting the students to make this decision,  
25

1  
2 it is helping to encourage and teach, but I'm not  
3 sure if I'm answering your question.

4 [background comments]

5 SARAH GARGANO: I think, like there are  
6 certain things that obviously would be distracting in  
7 school, like if somebody came only in their underwear  
8 or something, but there are nicer and there are just  
9 kinder ways to go about trying to make everybody  
10 dress appropriately for school, so instead of,  
11 especially, you know, telling someone to change  
12 publicly or just saying it in a demeaning tone, you  
13 can just say like, hey, that outfit isn't really  
14 appropriate for the environment we're trying to  
15 promote and next time just like try to maybe wear  
16 something a little more workcentric; whatever, that  
17 mean... [laugh] so.

18 MEGAN LYNCH: I think... [crosstalk]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: So you're still  
20 advocating for certain standards; you're just  
21 advocating for a different way of presenting those  
22 standards?

23 SARAH GARGANO: Yeah. Because I know the  
24 actual dress code, I think our biggest problem with  
25 it is that it only targets women or girls and it will

1  
2 talk about like bra straps or something like that and  
3 it won't say like, underwear in general, 'cause you  
4 know, boys have underwear too that can be exposed.  
5 So just making it more gender-neutral.

6 MEGAN LYNCH: I think also, I mean we  
7 discussed too, like teaching students to self-  
8 identify what is appropriate rather than us being the  
9 police of their bodies, you know, and dressing in a  
10 way that they are comfortable for school that they  
11 are able to learn, 'cause I'm very uncomfortable  
12 with... the supreme court precedent about dress codes  
13 in schools is that you can tell students not to wear  
14 something if it provides a material and substantial  
15 disruption to the learning environment or is lewd and  
16 in direct contradiction with the school's values. So  
17 I'm very uncomfortable with talking about like the  
18 shoulders of young women as being material  
19 [background comment] and substantial disruptions to  
20 the learning environment or lewd. So I would rather  
21 confront the discomfort of having a student wear  
22 something that maybe makes me uncomfortable than have  
23 to make them uncomfortable about their body, 'cause I  
24 think we have to ask ourselves a lot of questions  
25 about why are we uncomfortable, like the culture that

1  
2 we've grown up in that says it's okay to sexualize  
3 the bodies of 6th grade girls and younger, I think  
4 that's the real problem. So I think this is a big  
5 shift, like asking schools to step back from this and  
6 I think it will be uncomfortable and it might even be  
7 disruptive, but I think it's a really important  
8 conversation that we need to have, because like  
9 there's no sweater that is gonna change the culture;  
10 the way we'll change the culture is by forcing these  
11 really uncomfortable conversations, so.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Just using that  
13 same example that one of the students used,  
14 [background comment] suppose there's a student who  
15 doesn't feel that coming to school in underwear is  
16 lewd; what do you do in that case?

17 MEGAN LYNCH: I think as they so clearly  
18 said, I think you deal on that in a private way with  
19 that child; I'm not advocating for no standard, and I  
20 think if you have like a sincere, honest  
21 conversation, I think it would be very rare to say  
22 that there's a child who really would like firmly  
23 believe that coming to school in underwear was not a  
24 disruption to their own learning. So I think like  
25 building our dress code to address those very rare



1 instances of a kid whose like perception might be so  
2 off is not the way we wanna build our system. So I'd  
3 rather deal with like the occasional here and there  
4 challenge than to build the system around the worst  
5 case scenario.  
6

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Okay. So in  
8 there somewhere there's still a standard?

9 MEGAN LYNCH: Yes.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Okay. Thank  
11 you, Mr. Chair.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. You know,  
13 but it seriously worries me; when I hear the term  
14 "create an environment unconducive to learning," my  
15 own personal life has been affected by that. My  
16 principal told me that by virtue of coming out of the  
17 closet I was creating an environment in my school  
18 unconducive to learning. My principal told me that  
19 when I posted a flyer for the Lesbian and Gay  
20 Teachers Association on the faculty bulletin board  
21 that I created a condition unconducive to learning  
22 and demanded that it be removed. I've heard of LGBT  
23 students who have been told that they can't wear a  
24 rainbow flag on a tee shirt because it creates an  
25 environment unconducive to learning. So I think we

1  
2 have to be very, very careful about how we loosely  
3 use that term and in particular as it relates to  
4 women and that's why I was applauding your testimony  
5 here today, because I have had personal experiences,  
6 in a different way, but under the same type of  
7 circumstances, and so I just wanna say thank you.  
8 Thank you for coming in.

9 [background comments]

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And we're gonna call  
11 up our next group. Julienne Verdi from Planned  
12 Parenthood; Sarah Fajardo from the Coalition for  
13 Asian American Children and Families; Sharene Roig  
14 from CONNECT and Michele Paoletta from Day One.

15 [pause]

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, I have to swear  
17 you in. Would you raise your right hand, please? Do  
18 you solemnly swear or affirm to tell the truth, the  
19 whole truth and nothing but the truth and to answer  
20 the last Council Member questions honestly? Okay.  
21 Who would like to start? Start over here? Okay.

22 JULIENNE VERDI: Good afternoon. I'm  
23 Julienne Verdi, Director of Government Relations at  
24 Planned Parenthood of New York City (PPNYC). As a  
25 survivor of intimate partner violence myself, I am

1  
2 pleased to be here today to provide testimony in  
3 support of five resolutions calling on the New York  
4 State Legislature and the New York City Department of  
5 Education to take measures to increase resources and  
6 education surrounding bullying and intimate partner  
7 violence. PPNYC thanks our strong supporter and  
8 Chair of the Committee on Education, the Honorable  
9 Council Member Daniel Dromm, for his leadership and  
10 convening this hearing. We welcome the opportunity  
11 to discuss ways we can improve education for all New  
12 York students.

13           As a sexual and reproductive healthcare  
14 provider, we see 50,000 patients annually in our four  
15 health centers located throughout New York City. In  
16 addition to our clinical services, PPNYC has a robust  
17 education program, providing both youth and adult  
18 education programs. Our Education and Training  
19 Department provides education, training and outreach  
20 to more than 25,000 youth, adults and professionals  
21 annually. Our programs aim to deliver information  
22 and tools to help our participants lead sexually  
23 healthy, safe and responsible lives.

24           Specifically, in 2013 we reached more  
25 than 16,800 youth between the ages of 11 and 21

1 through education and outreach programs. All of the  
2 educational curriculum we provide includes a healthy  
3 relationship component. One curricula in particular  
4 titled, *All of Us*, is designed as a holistic model of  
5 sexual health for lesbian, gay, bisexual and  
6 transgender youth. It is grounded in the idea that  
7 LGBT teens with sexual health information that is  
8 medically accurate and age appropriate, while also  
9 acknowledging the vast range of gender and sexual  
10 expressions, creates an affirming environment for  
11 LGBT youth, identifies and promotes healthy decision-  
12 making in teens' sexual lives.

14 Curriculum like *All of Us* recognizes the  
15 interconnections between bullying, sexual assault and  
16 intimate partner violence and education regarding  
17 sexual health, condom negotiation, consent and  
18 healthy relationships. PPNYC also provides training  
19 for educators and other professionals through our  
20 training institute. In this capacity we are  
21 finalizing a training on the topic of teen intimate  
22 partner violence tentatively scheduled for May of  
23 2015.

24 Our experience as a sexual health  
25 education and service provider shows us firsthand the

1  
2 gaps that remain in New York City's sexual health  
3 education, which has a significant impact on young  
4 people's health and well-being. New York City has an  
5 opportunity to become a leader in comprehensive sex  
6 education; comprehensive sex education includes  
7 education on anti-bullying and anti-intimate partner  
8 violence measures and it must teach not just the  
9 basic prevention lessons, but also provide students  
10 the skills to build healthy relationships and caring  
11 communities and empower students to make the best  
12 decisions [bell] that are right for them.

13           Research has demonstrated clear  
14 correlations between comprehensive sex ed and  
15 improved confidence, healthier behaviors and even  
16 improved math and reading scores. Comprehensive sex  
17 ed in every school for every student K-12 could help  
18 decrease incidents of assault and abuse. Despite  
19 efforts to improve sex ed, many students are still  
20 not receiving instruction in school and what is being  
21 taught often does not include enough support around  
22 communication, healthy relationships and support for  
23 LGBTQ students. These causes are interrelated; we  
24 must discuss what meaningful, consent, celebration of  
25 differences and cultural competency looks like in

1  
2 order for any policies to promote real change and  
3 knowledge, attitudes and behaviors. All students  
4 must be taught about consent and what healthy  
5 relationships look like and must be given adequate  
6 resources to prevent and respond to gender-based  
7 assault. Unfortunately, students are often taught  
8 that sexual responsibility lies on the shoulders of  
9 only one gender; as a result, sexual violence is  
10 rampant; the statistics are staggering, nearly 1 in 5  
11 college women have experienced rape and 1 in 4 have  
12 faced unwanted sexual contact; 1 in 4 will experience  
13 intimate partner violence in her lifetime. The fight  
14 to end sexual assault and intimate partner violence  
15 must include efforts to improve sex health education,  
16 starting many years before students even think about  
17 going to college or entering into intimate  
18 relationships. Also, all students, not just student  
19 athletes, need more awareness and education around  
20 preventing intimate partner violence. We encourage  
21 the New York State Legislature and the New York City  
22 Department of Education to expand the proposed  
23 mandate beyond just public school athletic programs.

24 We applaud the City Council's commitment  
25 to increasing access to anti-bullying and anti-

1  
2 violence education in our schools. When schools fail  
3 to adequately teach these lessons, youths enter into  
4 relationships without learning how to navigate these  
5 issues to advocate and protect for themselves and  
6 this has devastating effects on all young people.

7 PPNYC supports comprehensive sex ed  
8 policies consistently delivered from K-12 that are  
9 age appropriate, medially accurate, LGBTQ-tolerant  
10 and culturally competent, with a goal of preparing  
11 students to make the decisions that are right for  
12 them and imparts the skills to build healthy  
13 relationships and compassionate communities.

14 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next  
16 please.

17 SARAH FAJARDO: Good afternoon. My name  
18 is Sarah Fajardo and I'm a Policy Coordinator for the  
19 Coalition for Asian American Children and Families.  
20 We'd like to thank Chair Dromm and the members of the  
21 Education Committee for holding this important  
22 hearing regarding dating violence and bullying in  
23 schools, as we strongly endorse the resolutions  
24 brought before the Committee today.

1  
2 Since 1986 CACF has been the nation's  
3 only pan-Asian children's advocacy organization and  
4 we work to improve the health and well-being of APA,  
5 Asian Pacific American, children and families in New  
6 York City. We focus our work on education, health  
7 and child welfare policy advocacy.

8 Asian Pacific American youth face a  
9 variety of unique challenges when it comes to  
10 education and school safety. There are over one  
11 million APA residents living in New York City and  
12 15.3 percent of students attending New York City  
13 public schools identify as APA.

14 APA youth often hail from immigrant  
15 families, where 42.5 percent of New York City's Asian  
16 Americans live in linguistic isolation, meaning no  
17 one over the age of 14 in a household speaks English  
18 well. Additionally, APAs are suffering from high  
19 rates of poverty in New York and also suffer from  
20 huge barriers in terms of language and culture. Many  
21 immigrant families also lack the knowledge of  
22 available systems and resources which leave their  
23 children feeling isolated and marginalized, as they  
24 must navigate school systems alone.



1  
2 According to the U.S. Department of  
3 Education's National Center for Education Statistics,  
4 the highest rate of bullying in schools was self-  
5 reported by APA youth in 2009; 50 percent of New York  
6 City students surveyed by the Asian American Legal  
7 Defense and Education Fund (ALDEF) in 2012 reported  
8 having experienced bias-based bullying.

9 Additionally, in the APA community an estimated 41-61  
10 percent of women report experiencing physical and/or  
11 sexual abuse by an intimate partner during their  
12 lifetime. As many of us know here, research suggests  
13 that children who witness domestic violence in their  
14 homes are more likely to be involved in abusive  
15 relationships later in life and thus instituting  
16 dating violence education and dating violence  
17 policies in schools is a critical preventative  
18 measure for New York City and New York State.

19 Biased-based harassment and  
20 discrimination is not an uncommon experience for  
21 youth of color, especially those who are immigrants  
22 or children of immigrants. APA youth often encounter  
23 racial slurs, are discriminated against based on  
24 stereotypes and English-language learners are also  
25

1  
2 discriminated against based on their English-language  
3 skills.

4 CACF supports all of the resolutions  
5 before the Council today; we do recommend that the  
6 Council consider including cultural competency as a  
7 part of any development of curricula, [bell]  
8 training, etc. We also... sorry, one more  
9 recommendation... We also recommend that the City  
10 Council adopt comprehensive guidance programs in  
11 school that provide all students with  
12 social/emotional supports and integrated college and  
13 career advising. Thank you for your time.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next  
15 please.

16 SHARENE ROIG: Good afternoon. My name  
17 is Sharene Roig and I'm the Coordinator of the Women  
18 and Girls Programs for CONNECT, a nonprofit dedicated  
19 to preventing interpersonal violence and promoting  
20 gender justice in New York City.

21 My remarks today come from my experience  
22 of working with CONNECT and our community partners  
23 and of my long-time work as a domestic violence  
24 advocate, counselor, activist and educator. I have  
25 worked with individuals, groups and in many New York

1  
2 City public high schools and middle schools for over  
3 a decade.

4 First of all I want to thank Chair Dromm  
5 and all Council Members here today. For years  
6 CONNECT has worked in public middle and high schools,  
7 providing workshops on healthy relationships and teen  
8 dating violence. As each of these workshops  
9 unfolded, what was revealed to me is; an overwhelming  
10 number of teens are experiencing abuse in their  
11 dating relationships. Each of our workshops allows  
12 for teens to process the definition of teen dating  
13 abuse, understand the types of abuse and what would  
14 be examples of how this would look like in dating  
15 relationships. As these discussions progressed, time  
16 and time again I could see that many of the teens  
17 have what we call light bulb moments, realizations  
18 that either they knew another teen or that they  
19 themselves were in an abusive relationship.

20 One of the young women shared that her  
21 boyfriend would attack her verbally and terrorize her  
22 continuously. He would grab her by the throat and  
23 slam her body against the wall as she begged him to  
24 stop. He would often threaten to throw her off the  
25 roof of her building out the window unless she

1  
2 did as he said. She shared that she lived on pins  
3 and needles and could not focus on her schoolwork or  
4 anything else in her life because she was always  
5 afraid of what he would do next, and she certainly  
6 knew what he was capable of.

7           Many have expressed that they knew that  
8 after being part of these workshops that what they  
9 saw or experienced themselves was teen dating  
10 violence and the discussions validated their  
11 experiences. Out of fear, shame and not knowing  
12 where to turn for help, many of these teens had not  
13 reported the abuse. As a result of these workshops,  
14 they now had a better understanding of their  
15 situation, had tools for safety and knew what  
16 resources were available to them.

17           It is vital that students in both middle  
18 and high schools are provided with the tools,  
19 knowledge and support necessary to clearly understand  
20 teen dating violence; this is important in prevention  
21 and intervention work. Teen dating violence is not a  
22 topic that is part of their core education in school,  
23 but it is certainly a topic that is essential for  
24 each of their lives. Teen dating violence is  
25 traumatic, dangerous and will have lifelong effects

1  
2 on the individuals who experience it. It is  
3 essential that all efforts are made to prevent it and  
4 to intervene effectively when it is present.

5           Again, thank you City Council Members for  
6 bringing this very important issue to the table and  
7 we are in support of all resolutions. [bell]

8           CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. And next,  
9 please.

10           MICHELE PAOLELLA: Good afternoon, thank  
11 you for holding this hearing.

12           My name's Michele Paolella and I'm the  
13 Program Director at Day One and I'm a social worker  
14 as well.

15           Day One is the only organization in New  
16 York that focuses our full resources on the issue of  
17 teen dating violence and we do that through offering  
18 preventive education workshops to youth and adults,  
19 as well as free legal, social and leadership  
20 development services to young survivors, ages 24 and  
21 under.

22           We're also the lead organization of  
23 Advocates for Safe and Empowering Relationships, a  
24 citywide coalition made up of culturally-specific  
25 organizations combating intimate partner violence and

1  
2 sexual violence amongst youth, which you heard a  
3 little bit about earlier.

4           In the interest of time I'll skip ahead  
5 to just say that we know that there's a demonstrated  
6 connection between bullying and intimate partner  
7 violence, but something that hasn't been mentioned  
8 yet is that 60 percent of campus sexual assaults also  
9 occur within the context of a dating relationship,  
10 and for our clients, beginning college can be an  
11 escalating factor in what was already an abusive  
12 relationship in high school, when an abuser will  
13 perceive a loss of control as the survivor goes away  
14 to start an education. Dating abuse in high school  
15 and sexual assault during college are inexorably  
16 linked and we appreciate the Council's focus on this  
17 in a recent hearing.

18           Young survivors of abuse experience  
19 eating disorders, substance abuse and skip or drop  
20 out of school, they also experience interrupted  
21 development, education and career planning. The  
22 abuse can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder,  
23 disengagement from educational career plans and long-  
24 term economic instability for survivors. The  
25 resulting burden on the police, courts and healthcare

1  
2 systems are dramatic and costly, in addition to the  
3 costs to the survivors themselves. This exactly why  
4 prevention efforts, as well as these resolutions that  
5 we're discussing today are so essential.

6 Day One recently collaborated with Pace  
7 University to examine the impact of mandatory  
8 prevention educations in schools nationwide, so this  
9 isn't New York-specific data, but we see that the  
10 data are promising. For example, in states without  
11 mandatory teen dating violence education, an average  
12 of 9.8 percent of the students report experiencing  
13 physical assaults within their relationships, lower  
14 than the average that we have here in New York City;  
15 that's the national average. In states where there  
16 has been mandatory teen dating violence education, so  
17 focus on mandatory, that percentage has dropped to  
18 9.2 percent of students, and while that percentage  
19 change might sound low, here in New York City public  
20 schools that would translate to 6,600 young people  
21 that did not experience physical assault at the hands  
22 of their intimate partner, in four years from now.  
23 So imagine over a decade or over time how much that  
24 would grow.

1  
2 Day One supports the passing of the  
3 resolutions that are being discussed and appreciates  
4 any steps that the Council can take to go further to  
5 meet the following goals: a mandatory and focused  
6 curriculum for K-12 [bell] that addresses healthy  
7 relationships and dating abuse -- May I continue for  
8 just a moment? Thank you. By 2013 twenty-one states  
9 had implemented some kind of dating abuse prevention  
10 legislation and 12 more have legislation pending  
11 right now; New York is not one of those states. Any  
12 successful curriculum must be implemented within a  
13 school where all of the professionals have been  
14 trained, and this has been mentioned before; we don't  
15 know who the person is going to be that a young  
16 person feels comfortable going to to disclose the  
17 abuse; young people are often distrusting of  
18 authority figures, with reason, and we must ensure  
19 that students who come forward with disclosures of  
20 being abused are met with knowledgeable, sensitive  
21 guidance and not discomfort, distress or  
22 misinformation that can place them at further risk.  
23 The Department of Education needs a written policy  
24 addressing dating abuse that acknowledges the problem  
25 and creates protocols for schools that are already



1  
2 experiencing these issues. And in addition, details  
3 of inadequate policy are written out in the written  
4 testimony that I've given you today, so I won't read  
5 them, but we believe that detailed elements of  
6 inadequate policy are enumerated in what I've given  
7 you and are really important to consider while moving  
8 forward in collaboration with the Department of  
9 Education to implement this mandatory preventive  
10 education.

11 Thank you so much for holding this  
12 important hearing and giving me the opportunity to  
13 speak with you today. We thank the City Council for  
14 its past and current support of Day One and thank you  
15 again for addressing the important issue of  
16 relationship violence amongst youth.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So thank you. And  
18 CACF and Day One, I think in your testimony you  
19 constantly stressed the importance of mandatory  
20 training on domestic violence issues, but we don't  
21 even have that in the DOE for bullying. Now they  
22 argue that yes, it's mandatory that one classroom in  
23 one school does it, I guess, and this is my argument  
24 with the DOE, but it's not mandatory for every  
25 classroom [background comments] and you can go

1  
2 through the public school system and never have  
3 received any of this information or anything on  
4 bullying either, and so I think continuing to stress  
5 the importance of it being mandatory is really  
6 vitally important to ensuring that we get to every  
7 student in the public school system. So that was one  
8 comment I made on there.

9 And I noticed in your testimony with Day  
10 One that even a guidance counselor said, "Maybe he  
11 wouldn't be so angry," as she was talking to somebody  
12 in an abusive relationship.. [interpose]

13 MICHELE PAOLELLA: Yeah..

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: "if you didn't wear  
15 your skirt so short." So I mean this comes up  
16 constantly, over and over and over again in these  
17 types of relationships.

18 MICHELE PAOLELLA: Yeah. Thank you very  
19 much for pulling that out of my testimony; I  
20 appreciate it.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes, it's... I think  
22 it's key...

23 MICHELE PAOLELLA: Yeah.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: particularly in light  
25 of the discussion that happened before, that we

1  
2 continue to stress that point that we can't re-  
3 victimize the person who's the target of this type of  
4 harassment and violence ultimately.

5           And then my last thing for the day,  
6 'cause we'll end on this 'cause we're gonna do  
7 another hearing on sex education, Planned Parenthood.  
8 I noticed in your testimony you spoke about condom  
9 negotiation; vitally important and it's an assault of  
10 another type if in fact a man refuses to wear a  
11 condom, especially at a very intimate moment, and I  
12 think that working with students to understand how  
13 you negotiate sexual relations and how you negotiate  
14 the wearing of a condom and even educating our youth  
15 about how to use a condom is something that the  
16 public school system has been lacking for a long  
17 period of time. So we hope to have a hearing on this  
18 at some point in the beginning of the year; I don't  
19 know exactly when it will be, but those are issues  
20 that I would like to look at further, because I know  
21 from personal experiences that, particularly with  
22 regard to AIDS education, that unless you know how to  
23 negotiate condom usage, you probably are not gonna do  
24 it, you know, and that was a big part of the early  
25

1  
2 struggle and remains a big part of the struggle now  
3 for HIV/AIDS prevention.

4           So I just wanna say thank you to all of  
5 you for coming in; appreciate your testimony and look  
6 forward to continuing to work with you on these  
7 issues. Thank you.

8           [background comments]

9           CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And is there anyone  
10 else that wants to give testimony? Alright, none  
11 being seen, I adjourn this meeting [gavel] at 3:53 in  
12 the afternoon. Thank you very much.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date November 21, 2014