

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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June 15, 2022
Start: 10:14 a.m.
Recess: 1:08 p.m.

HELD AT: Hybrid Hearing - Committee Room
City Hall

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

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Shaun Abreu
Alexa Avilés
Carmen N. De La Rosa
Eric Dinowitz
Oswald Feliz
James F. Genarro
Jennifer Gutiérrez
Shahana K. Hanif
Kamillah Hanks
Shekar Krishnan
Linda Lee
Farah N. Louis
Julie Menin
Mercedes Narcisse
Lincoln Restler
Pierina Ana Sanchez

Lynn C. Schulman
Althea V. Stevens
Sandra Ung

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

Christopher Tricarico
Senior Executive Director of Office of Food and
Nutrition Services

Kevin Moran
Chief School Operations Officer of Board of DOE

Donald Nesbit
Vice President of Local 372 DC 37

Julia McCarthy
New York Health Foundation

Rachel Sabella
No Kid Hungry New York

Kelly Wind
Coalition for Healthy School Food

Ally Miller
Edible Schoolyard NYC

Liz Accles
Community Food Advocates

Debby Lee Cohen
Cafeteria Culture

Roma Yang

Union Square Academy

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

Philip Chong

Quincy Asian Resource

Aideen Dela Cruz

New York City DOE Physical Therapist

Jenny Valaderas [sp?]

Union Square Academy

Eloisa Trinidad

Chilis on Wheels

Tom Buckley

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Good morning. Good
3 morning and welcome to today's Committee hearing on
4 school food. I'm Rita Joseph, Chair of Education
5 Committee. Today we are having a hybrid hearing with
6 Council Members and some witnesses in-person while
7 others will be testifying remotely via Zoom. We ask
8 for your patience as we navigate this new
9 environment. We're here today to talk about school
10 foods, because there's nothing more important than
11 the health and wellbeing of New York City's more than
12 one million school children. According to the
13 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, most
14 children in the United States get as much as half of
15 their daily calories at school. That makes school
16 food an essential part of students' nutrition and
17 health, as well as important tools in combatting
18 childhood hunger. Hunger has always been a critical
19 issue in New York City, but has become even worse
20 since the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to the pandemic,
21 one in five New York City children were experiencing
22 food insecurity, but since the pandemic, the
23 proportion of food-insecure children have grown from
24 one and four. We also know that healthy eating in
25 childhood and adolescence is important for proper

1
2 growth, development and to prevent obesity in various
3 other health conditions, including diabetes, high
4 blood pressure, and heart disease, among others.

5 Additionally, in order to succeed in the classroom,
6 every student needs nutritious food in order to live
7 a healthy life and be their best at each school day.

8 As a classroom teacher for over 20 years, I know how
9 important school food programs are for students.

10 Hungry children cannot pay attention, concentrate, or
11 participate effectively in class. That's why I'm

12 such a huge supporter of the Breakfast in the

13 Classroom Program, which provides students with

14 breakfast in a bag to eat in the classroom after the

15 start of a school day. Most students are not able to

16 get to school early in the morning before school

17 starts to have a sit-down meal in the cafeteria.

18 Breakfast in the Classroom allows them to sleep later

19 and get both rest and food they need to stay alert

20 and focused in school. It also results in improved

21 behavior and fewer fights among students. The

22 Department of Education Office of Food and Nutrition

23 Services, known as OFNS, offer free breakfast, lunch,

24 and after school meals to all New York City public

25 school students during the school year. Each summer,

1
2 OFNS also provides free meals at hundreds of sites
3 across the City including designated public schools,
4 community pools, centers, parks, and food trucks. In
5 recent years, DOE's school food meal-- DOE's school
6 meal programs have gone a number of changes such as
7 phasing out unhealthy lunch, breakfast items
8 containing dangerously high-risk of sodium, fat, and
9 preservatives. And DOE says their nutrition standard
10 now exceed USDA standards. For school meals, DOE has
11 also established "Meatless Mondays" with all
12 vegetarian breakfast and lunch menus, expanded
13 efforts to use more locally-grown produce and install
14 salad bars in many school buildings to provide access
15 to more fresh vegetables and fruits. In addition to
16 breakfast in the classroom, DOE has other new
17 programs like Garden to Café schools which lets
18 students grow and harvest food at community gardens,
19 actually eat what they have grown. A few years ago,
20 DOE initiated a scratching cook-- scratch cooking
21 pilot which installed professionally trained chef at
22 several Bronx schools to develop scratch cooked meals
23 doing fresh-- using fresh ingredients to move away
24 from highly processed foods. The DOE also launched a
25 cafeteria re-design initiative for high schools to

1
2 transform them into food court type setting that
3 provides a more welcoming environment, more daily
4 menu options, and faster service. Students
5 obviously, like as high school with re-designed
6 cafeterias experienced a 35 percent increase in
7 student participation in school meals, but we've
8 heard that only 44 cafeterias across the City have
9 transformed to date. Food and nutrition education
10 programs are also critical because they provide
11 children with knowledge to make healthy food choices
12 and adopt lifelong healthy habits. I have firsthand
13 experience with nutrition education program called
14 Cookshop Classroom. Every Friday I'd conduct
15 interactive lessons and hands-on activities with
16 students and they would be so engaged and excited and
17 really look forward to participating. There's also a
18 Cookshop family component. I work with parents so
19 they can learn more about food and nutrition and cook
20 meals with their kids at home. Unfortunately, many
21 schools don't have nutrition education programs like
22 Cookshop, and even those that do not are unable to
23 provide enough hours of instruction. Bottom line is
24 we want all our children to have access to fresh,
25 nutritious, healthy food that's also appealing and

1
2 tastes good so they'll actually eat it and not throw
3 it in the trash. We know that efforts like scratch
4 cooking, salad bars, garden to café, and vegetarian
5 options are effective in providing more fresh, whole,
6 healthy food in students' diets, and we know that
7 universal free school meals, breakfast in the
8 classroom, and cafeteria re-design actually work to
9 get more students to participate in school meal
10 programs. We know that food and nutrition programs
11 like Cookshop empowers students to make healthier
12 choices. By introducing all of these initiatives
13 it's clear that OFNS really cares about providing
14 nutritious school meals, but we also know that more
15 can and must be done to get us to the goal of
16 providing all our children with fresh, nutritious,
17 healthy food so they'll grow up and live long healthy
18 lives. At today's hearing, the Committee hopes to
19 learn more from DOE about their efforts to improve
20 school foods program and increase the number of
21 students participating. We'd also like to hear
22 details about plans to expand existing successful
23 school food programs, as well as any new initiatives
24 in the works. In addition, we know that the pandemic
25 and school closures cause major disruptions to school

1 food programs, and we'd like to learn more about the
2 challenges presented to OFNS and any remaining
3 impacts on school food operations. We also hope to
4 hear recommendations for improvements from advocates
5 and other stakeholders. I want to thank everyone
6 who's testifying today. I want to thank the City
7 Council staff for all the work they put in today, Jan
8 Atwell [sp?], [inaudible], and Frank Perez [sp?]. I
9 also want to thank my staff, Stan Weinberger [sp?]
10 and Connor Irving [sp?]. I'd like to remind everyone
11 who wish to testify in-person today that you must
12 fill out a witness slip which is located at the desk
13 of the Sergeant at Arms near the entrance of this
14 room. To allow as many people as possible to
15 testify, testimony will be limited to three minutes
16 per person, whether you're testifying on Zoom or in-
17 person. I'm also going to ask my colleagues to limit
18 their questions and comments to five minutes. Now,
19 without any further, I'd like to first-- turn to the
20 first witness panel. Of course. And I also would
21 like to acknowledge my colleagues, Council Member
22 Carmen De La Rosa, Council Member Shahana Hanif,
23 Council Member Julie Menin, Council Member Eric
24 Dinowitz, and Council Member Mercedes Narcisse. Jan

1 will administer the oath to Chris Tricarico, sorry if
2 I mispronounce, and Kevin Moran. I will call on each
3 of you individually for a response. Please raise
4 your right hands.
5

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Do you affirm to tell
7 the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth
8 before this committee and to respond honestly to
9 Council Member questions? Mr. Tricarico?

10 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: I do.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Mr. Moran?

12 KEVIN MORAN: [inaudible]

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. You may
14 begin your testimony.

15 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Morning
16 Chair Joseph and members of the Education Committee.
17 My name is Christopher Tricarico and I am the Senior
18 Executive Director of Department of Education's
19 Office of Food and Nutrition Services. Joining me
20 today is Kevin Moran, Chief School Operations Officer
21 of the Board of Department of Education. Thank you
22 for inviting us to discuss the DOE's School Food
23 Program. To begin, I want to emphasize that Mayor
24 Adams and Chancellor Banks are committed to ensuring
25 every student has equal access to quality nutritious

1 meals to help them succeed in and out of school. The
2 Chancellor has set forth an ambitious vision to
3 transform our school system that encompasses four
4 pillars. One, reimagining the student experience.
5 Two, scaling, sustaining, and restoring what works.
6 Three, prioritizing wellness. Four, engaging
7 families to be our true partners. Those pillars are
8 at the heart of our School Food Program and are
9 reflected in these priorities, providing meals that
10 are both delicious and adhere to high nutritional
11 standards, transforming our students' dining
12 experience, incorporating community engagement and
13 student feedback to approve our menus, promoting
14 equity across the system. I would like to personally
15 thank the Council for its longstanding commitment to
16 ensuring that students have access to healthy meals
17 as well as successfully advocating for universal free
18 lunch, breakfast in the classroom, and funding the
19 first year of a halal and kosher meals pilot
20 programs. We look forward to our continued
21 collaboration. I would also like to thank the school
22 food advocates who we closely work with and who are
23 great partners to us. We are proud of the innovative
24 work carried out by our over 8,000 dedicated
25

1 employees and 1,300 kitchens. We serve more than
2 800,000 meals per day to students attending over
3 2,000 schools, including charters and non-public
4 schools. All meals adhere to our rigorous
5 nutritional and health standards for the New York
6 City Department of Health and go beyond the USDA
7 National School Lunch Program standards. Offering
8 breakfast, lunch, and after school meals offer
9 delicious healthy options that appeal to students of
10 all ages and diverse backgrounds. Each day, our
11 school food service workers prepare free breakfast
12 which can include fruits, yogurts, bagels, cereals,
13 and more available to every student to help ensure
14 that they start the day with a healthy and nutritious
15 meal. Further, we are proud to offer universal free
16 lunch, ensuring every student has access to high-
17 quality meals throughout the day. All of our
18 ingredients adhere to strict standards regarding
19 sodium, fat, sugar, and calories to ensure healthy
20 meals for all students. For example, we only
21 purchase antibiotic-free chicken tenders with sodium
22 not exceeding 480 milligrams, saturated fat under 10
23 percent of total calories, and breading containing at
24 least 51 percent whole grain. We also feature whole
25

1 fresh fruit and fresh vegetables, which about 20
2 percent come from New York State. We have made a lot
3 of progress over the years in creating delicious,
4 healthy, culturally responsive, positive dining
5 experiences for our students, and we are always
6 looking for ways to improve. In addition to
7 nutrition, the Department of Education is laser-
8 focused on equity. Our citywide menus include two
9 meatless days, 100 percent antibiotic-free chicken,
10 scratch recipes, and fresh vegetables and fruit with
11 every serving. The menus are available in nine
12 languages posted on our website, accessible through
13 our school food app, and are carefully planned by our
14 team of professional chefs. These menus are
15 identical in all districts. Beginning this fall, our
16 new Cook Ambassadors, one in every district, will
17 make certain cooks are continually trained in recipe
18 execution, ensuring all menu items are made
19 uniformly. Cook Ambassadors will also be trained in
20 scratch cooking techniques, food safety, and customer
21 service. Furthermore, the Taskforce on Racial
22 Inclusion and Equity, TRIE: neighborhoods are
23 prioritized when selecting schools for new programs.
24 These neighborhoods are defined as the most impacted
25

1
2 by COVID-19 in addition to communities that have a
3 high percentage of other health and socioeconomic
4 disparities. All upcoming cafeteria enhancement
5 experience sites and summer meal sites prioritize
6 these TRIE neighborhoods. CEE is a renovation of a
7 service line that allows more daily choices for
8 students as well as updated furniture and artwork
9 created by students from each school. We are in the
10 process of completing 40 more CEE during this Capital
11 Plan. We also plan to renovate all middle and high
12 school cafeteria service lines and are excited that
13 50 million was just added to the Capital Budget for
14 these renovations. We're also proud of the work we
15 have done in over 60 halal sites since the Council
16 pilot in 2019. All of these sites now have certified
17 kitchens and staff that serve approved halal meals.
18 We partner with the moms from across the City to
19 support the initiative and are in the process of
20 certifying 15 more sites that will begin serving
21 halal meals in September of 2022. Any schools
22 interested in becoming a halal-certified site should
23 engage their school community and reach out to my
24 office. The Chancellor's prioritization of community
25 engagement has renewed our focus on incorporating

1
2 feedback, which is the foundation of our school meals
3 program. To this end, we have embarked on an
4 extensive community engagement plan in which OFNS
5 representations attend all community education
6 council meetings. The OFNS representatives provide a
7 brief overview of our schools meals program, then
8 answer questions and gather feedback that is
9 synthesized and becomes the basis of a decision-
10 making around menus. This engagement will continue
11 in the fall when OFNS will join CEC, parent/teacher
12 associations, school leadership teams, and other
13 community-based meetings. In addition, starting in
14 September, we once again will be meeting regularly
15 with student ambassadors and student councils to hear
16 directly from them. Student taste testing which have
17 been taking place all year long will continue in the
18 fall as we work through new recipes and menu items.
19 Turning to our Summer Meals Program. We look forward
20 to offering free breakfast and lunch to anyone 18
21 years old and younger across the City during July and
22 August. Our priority is to be flexible in addressing
23 the needs of particular communities and we are
24 committed to expanding our reach and adding as many
25 sites as possible. To this end, we are accepting

1 applications for Summer Meal sites throughout June as
2 NYCHA and Parks Department continue to hire seasonal
3 staff throughout the month. Finally, I want to
4 recognize our amazing School Food service workers who
5 demonstrated their ongoing commitment to communities
6 during the darkest days of the pandemic. In a
7 Herculean effort, we transformed our school
8 operations to provide delicious, nutritious meals to
9 the entire City. From May 2020 to August 2021, our
10 food service workers prepared and served over 100
11 million meals, providing three meals a day to anyone
12 who needed them, children and adults alike. We are
13 incredibly proud of the work that they do. In
14 conclusion, I want to reiterate my gratitude to our
15 close partnership with Mayor Adams' Office and the
16 City Council. Students need to feel healthy and
17 well-nourished to thrive at school and beyond.
18 Thanks to the hard work of our food service workers,
19 we strive to make this a reality every single day
20 across this great city. We look forward to
21 continuing this work together to ensure the health
22 and wellbeing of all our children. Thank you, and we
23 are happy to answer your questions.
24

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Kevin, are you testifying as well? No, just here for support. I'd like to recognize Council Member Linda Lee. Thank you for being here. Alright, let's get to questions. At the onset of COVID-19 pandemic in March of 2020, DOE was forced to close schools, buildings, and transitioned to remote learning, and the Office of Food and Nutrition Services pivoted to a grab-n-go service model offering free breakfast, lunch to all students and to the general public to roughly 500 school buildings across the City. In the fall of 2020, schools reopened to a blended learning model which called for a combination of remote and in-person instruction. This meant that OFNS had to operate hybrid model serving meals in schools to students in attendance while continuing to provide grab-n-go service for remote students as well. Did OFSN have to hire additional staff to meet the demand of this hybrid service model in each school? If so, what was the new staff retained once school was fully reopened and hybrid service was discontinued? Since the onset of COVID-19 has OFSN experienced any staffing issues related to the pandemic?

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2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: My voice
3 is loud enough, but-- during the pandemic, we did not
4 hire many student-- new staff members. We lost
5 several staff members during the pandemic, but we
6 were able to function and serve the hybrid model with
7 the staff that we had. Since early September of 2021
8 we have been hiring staff to make sure we cover all
9 of the vacancies that we have. At the moment, we are
10 almost back to the pre-pandemic levels of staff and
11 have not missed any work that was needed in all of
12 the schools.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. As you
14 remember, in September of 20-- September 13th, 2021
15 marked the full-term of in-person attendance for all
16 students, teachers, and staff. Can you share with us
17 what the average daily number of meals served between
18 the start of the pandemic and the average daily meals
19 served now? Have there been a reduction or increase
20 in the number of meals served post-pandemic? If so,
21 what do you attribute the change to?

22 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: The
23 average daily attendance of the City did decrease
24 when we returned after the pandemic, after the school
25 closures. We are currently serving an estimated

1
2 number of meals around 800,000 meals per day. That
3 includes breakfast, lunch, snack and supper. That is
4 definitely lower from what we were doing pre-
5 pandemic, but that also takes into consideration less
6 number of students that are attending New York City
7 schools.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And that was because
9 of that, okay. What if residue [sic] of pandemic
10 efforts-- effects have impacted school meal programs
11 since school resumed to full in-person instruction.
12 For example, have there been pandemic-related supply
13 chain issue? If so, how have they affected your
14 operations?

15 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: I'm very
16 proud to say that my office from the start of the
17 pandemic decided to increase as many of our options
18 that we have in our product basket. We did have
19 specific supply chain issues, but it never prevented
20 us from serving a reimbursable, healthy, nutritious,
21 delicious meal to all the students that we were
22 serving.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And for now,
24 everything is back to normal, running on time, on
25

1
2 schedule, and the needs of the students are being
3 met?

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Every
5 single day, Chair.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: due to school
7 closure transition to remote instruction in early in
8 the pandemic, a federal program, the Coronavirus
9 Pandemic EBT card was created to cover meal expense
10 for students who typically receive free meals when
11 the schools were learning remotely due to the
12 pandemic. Because New York City's a universal free
13 lunch district, all public school students are
14 eligible to receive this PEBT regardless of their
15 household income, immigration status. The benefits
16 were retroactive to March 2020 and were loaded on EBT
17 cards that were distributed by mail. Families are
18 due to receive their third round of food benefits in
19 the amount of \$375 per child in June of 2020. Does
20 OFSN have any information about the EBT program and
21 whether all New York City public school families
22 receive it? Do you have any idea of how much funds
23 for the city families were spent?

24 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: The PEBT
25 Program is not run by the New York City Department of

1
2 Education, but we do have the attendance records and
3 the actual enrollment that we submit to the state to
4 make sure all children who are in our system and our
5 school board authority get the PEBT money.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Do you have any idea
7 how much of the funds for the City families were
8 spent? Do you know?

9 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Say that
10 again?

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: The funds that were
12 spent on the families, do you know how much? Do you
13 have an idea?

14 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: At the
15 current time I don't have that, but I can get that
16 answer and come back to you.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I would really
18 appreciate that. Thank you. At the outset of the
19 COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, I remember Congress
20 passing the Families First Coronavirus Response Act
21 which include child nutrition and the COVID-19
22 waivers that allowed all students regardless of
23 financial status to eat breakfast/lunch at school for
24 free. It also provided additional funding to schools
25 to offset higher food and labor costs, and

1 flexibility to meeting changes needs due to supply
2 chain disruption and school closures. However, all
3 of these waivers are due to expire on June 30th,
4 2022. One, what are the impact of the expiration of
5 child nutrition waivers have on summer meals for the
6 summer of 2022? What impact does the expiration of
7 child nutrition waivers have on school meals
8 operation for school 2022-2023? And how will the
9 supply chain challenges impact DOE's ability to meet
10 federal meal patterns requirement? Did the waiver
11 make it easier to provide meals in the face of the
12 supply chain challenges?
13

14 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: We'll take
15 one at a time.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: One at a time, yes,
17 please do.

18 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Yes, the
19 waivers do expire on June 30th. So, starting for the
20 first time in two years, this summer we will return
21 to pre-pandemic rules and regulations around the
22 summer meals program. What that means for students
23 is, they must eat meals inside of the cafeteria, and
24 any park or pool or any other area like that, they
25 must eat within a designated area. They will no

1
2 longer be allowed to take meals off-site, which they
3 were allowed during the pandemic. That is one waiver
4 that expires.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay.

6 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: During the
7 school year, the new school year coming up, since we
8 no longer are under the waivers, we will lose an
9 approximate 15 percent of the reimbursement for a
10 meal due to the summer pandemic waivers expiring.
11 Supply chain challenges, once again, we do not have
12 supply chain challenges. We are able to provide
13 every single day three nutritious meals as needed
14 that meet the reimbursable program that are healthy,
15 nutritious, and delicious. I think I covered them
16 all, or I missed that last one.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: you have one more.
18 You had one more. Your ability to meet the federal
19 meal pattern requirements, the meal pattern
20 requirements by the Federal Government.

21 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: we always
22 will meet the meal pattern requirements by the
23 Federal Government with every meal that we do. Going
24 back to what I said earlier, we make sure our product
25 inventory investment is well-stocked. In any time we

1
2 may run out of something, which happens rarely, we
3 always have a back-up option that is served. Schools
4 know this. Schools have it on their menu. We also
5 have alternative options on our menu every single
6 day.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. I'd also
8 like to recognize Council Member Louis. Good
9 morning. Good morning Council Member Alexa. Good
10 morning Council Member Shekar. I will open the floor
11 now to my colleagues for questioning. [inaudible]
12 Dinowitz and then after, Council Member Lee.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Good morning.

14 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Good
15 morning.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: I want to start
17 by saying I'm very pleased to hear that there are 60
18 halal sites, certified sites, and the work that
19 you're doing to provide more certifications at more
20 schools, and I look forward to reaching out to you
21 about that for certain. So one of the phrases you're
22 using is nutritious and delicious. Do you eat the
23 school lunch?

24

25

1
2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: I have
3 been eating school lunch ever since I'm four years
4 old.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Good.

6 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Not only am
7 I in this position now, I was a principal previous to
8 this, a teacher, and a student in all New York City
9 schools including the fact that my mother worked in
10 the School Food Office and my school when I was in
11 Martin Van Buren High School in Queens.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Love to hear
13 it. I'm wondering-- because I didn't-- we weren't
14 allowed to, by the way, as teachers we weren't
15 allowed to which is I guess good because it's for the
16 kids.

17 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Teachers
18 are allowed if you purchase meals.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Oh, yeah, no
20 thanks. But you know, the students would come up
21 with their breakfast and everything that you're
22 saying was on the plate, you had the fruit, the-- and
23 they would just eat the cereal. They'd come up with
24 their lunch, looks like a nice plate, and they would
25 just eat the French fries. And so I'm wondering what

1
2 survey data ex-- I'm assuming you ask the kids how
3 they feel about the food. Part of its cultural
4 competency, but part of it is just, hey, what changes
5 can we make to make sure you as a student are able to
6 make those healthy choices, because we're not sure
7 about that delicious part. So what survey data
8 exists to see if the students are actually eating the
9 food and enjoy the food?

10 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: So, a
11 couple of things, if you don't mind, I just want to
12 make some clarifications.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Sure.

14 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: The USDA
15 program that we are in, New York City School Food
16 Authority, mandates that we always serve three
17 components. We offer up to five components,
18 including offering milk. So, students must take at
19 least three components when they're--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: [interposing] I
21 get it. Don't mean to-- times ticking. I know they
22 take it. I'm saying they don't eat it.

23 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: so what we
24 do is--

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: [interposing]

3 That's why I'm asking what the survey data is and how
4 you're responsive to the desires of our students.

5 That's what I'm asking.

6 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: We test all
7 our products that go on the plate in front of
8 students. Every single item that goes on a tray is
9 approved by a student panel, whether it's in the past
10 or any upcoming items in the future. We do our best
11 to talk to students about what they like, but we
12 always have to do two things: do what they need, do
13 what they like, and follow the USDA regulation.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: And are those
15 panels, are those like public panels? Is it
16 available online? And as you recognize each
17 individual school community is different, you-- we
18 spoke about halal food, which is great, but there's
19 also other cultural differences depending on the
20 community. Do you take the needs of each individual
21 school or area into consideration with your student
22 panels?

23 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: All our
24 cooks are trained, actually, to make sure that
25 they're addressing any needs of the community, the

1
2 schools community specifically. We meet with
3 students at schools. We meet with students who are
4 on panels at schools, plus taste testing. Taste
5 testing is available at every school. All the school
6 has to do is ask for it. We will then come to the
7 school or bring children to headquarters where our
8 test kitchen is. but going back to the individual
9 communities, if the cooks know their communities,
10 which they are trained on, they are allowed to alter
11 the recipe with seasoning as long as that does not
12 change the nutritional value of the recipe to meet
13 the needs of that community. But I do want to stress
14 that menus are citywide. We look to make sure that
15 the plate that is served in the Bronx is served in
16 Staten Island and served in Queens and Manhattan.
17 And I missed the bar [sic] on that but I'm sure I'll
18 get to it eventually.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: No, you--

20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO:

21 [interposing] Brooklyn, sorry. Thank you.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: that's-- you
23 can exclude them, it's okay. I'm making people mad.
24 That's fine with me.

25

1
2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: I was a
3 principal in Brooklyn.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: So, it's there.
5 Have you-- I do want to talk further. Maybe I'll
6 email the questions, but I would like to know the
7 considerations about understanding that there's more
8 than seasoning that goes into the cultural
9 differences in food choices. I want to ask one other
10 question. It's related to the Garden to Café
11 Program. You knew I was going to ask about school
12 gardens. You know, because it's not just the
13 existence of food, as you understand, it's the
14 students' relationship with food, and of course
15 growing the food themselves develops a positive
16 relationship with healthy nutritious and delicious
17 food. So, I'm just going to ask a few questions
18 around gardens. How many school gardens exist? Not
19 relationships with community gardens, but really on
20 the school campuses. How many school gardens exist?
21 How many-- are there plans for expansion of existing
22 gardens or to expand more-- to provide more school
23 gardens in existing schools? And are there efforts
24 underway to ensure that school gardens or space for
25

1
2 new school gardens is included in all new
3 construction?

4 KEVIN MORAN: Yeah, so thank you very
5 much for the question. The Division of Operations
6 does have an Office of Sustainability within the
7 Division, and we right now currently have 952 garden
8 spaces across the City. That is inclusive of indoor
9 settings in aquaponics or other opportunities within
10 the classroom. We do have outdoor options that is--
11 sometimes there's access to a rooftop garden.
12 Sometimes there's access to a greenhouse on campus
13 like a larger space like Canarsi [sp?] High School,
14 for example. We also have raised planter beds. You
15 were aware of the space we have at Walton [sp?] and
16 other places. So, we definitely want to expand. We
17 partner with Grow NYC and other partners. We
18 certainly expand our reach with efforts through
19 [inaudible] grants through the Council's efforts. So
20 where there's interest there, we'd like to cultivate
21 that as well. So yes, we definitely have an
22 opportunity now to expand and do more. New school
23 construction does include some features. Most
24 notably there's one that most people are familiar
25 with, the Kathleen Grimm [sp?] school at Sandy Ground

1 [sp?]. That does have rooftop access that was built
2 as a net-zero school, which is really a highlight in
3 our kind of portfolio that it is solar and geothermal
4 and reduction of greenhouse gases with the focus on
5 actually having gardens on campus and on the rooftop.
6 So, yes, we want-- we are committed to that effort
7 and we will expand. I'd love to meet with you and
8 your team or any of those that are interested in
9 expanding more. But at current it's 952 sites across
10 the City.
11

12 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: And is-- is
13 there additional investments made for the next fiscal
14 year that--

15 KEVIN MORAN: Well, the Council does
16 provide 150,000 dollars for small school grants to
17 start small, 5,000 dollar grants to start seeding the
18 program quite literally, and so we'll look to you to
19 continue the conversation about additional
20 opportunities site-specific beyond the original
21 groupings.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Thank you.
23 Thank you, Chair.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. I'd like
25 to recognize Council Member Brewer, Council Member

1
2 Avilés, Council Member Gutiérrez, and Council Member
3 Abreu, and Krishnan. Thank you. Next question,
4 Council Member Lee?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Sorry, without the
6 Zoom hand function, I don't know what the order is.
7 So I'm getting-- I'm trying to get used to this.
8 Now, I'm trying to get used to the in-person. Okay.
9 Really quick question on the vendors that you utilize
10 in the contracting process. So, just out of
11 curiosity, how many vendors do you currently contract
12 to for the school meals?

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: so, we
14 currently have three main distributors that purchase
15 and deliver food to our schools, plus a lot of
16 contract-direct relationships where we have a
17 relationship with the vendor and they also deliver
18 food to our schools. The exact number of all the
19 vendors does change based on the number of contracts
20 that we have, contracts that are expired, and
21 contracts that are coming up. I can definitely follow
22 up with the specific number, but going back to the
23 original three main distributors that we use to
24 purchase and deliver food that all must meet our
25 regulations and standards.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, and then how
3 often are those contracts evaluated? So, is it like
4 five years, three years? And then what's the RFP
5 process? Can other folks get into that system? How
6 does that work?

7 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Excellent
8 question. Yes, it's every five years. It's expiring
9 at the end of 2024, and we're going to go through the
10 process once again to go out and bid these massive
11 great contracts.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, and are you
13 also-- and this is connecting to the culturally
14 competent meals. So is there room, I guess-- if
15 you're in charge of the RFP process, can we add some
16 kind of stipulation or sentence in there awarding
17 contracts to folks that do serve culturally diverse
18 meals? Because, you know, and it gets tricky,
19 because I understand there's [inaudible] scale,
20 right? Because we're talking about million students
21 in the school system, but then how do we make sure
22 that, you know, we're working with vendors that can
23 actually cook the food in the way that folks are
24 familiar or prefer?

1
2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Excellent
3 question. And this Chancellor is prioritizing that,
4 and we-- as we write all new contracts and putting in
5 language like that, including language around WMBE as
6 well as local purchasing language in there as well.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. And then one
8 quick question. I don't know if this is going to be
9 one of your questions, Chair Joseph, so I hope I'm
10 not stealing one. But in terms of the construction
11 and the redesign of the cafeterias, because like one
12 of the things we did was-- you know, we're providing--
13 - we have very little capital dollars from all of our
14 pots, but you know, the air conditioning for staff
15 that work in the kitchen is extremely important. And
16 so, you know, I think some of the re-- and also, in
17 terms of the re-design of the kitchens, it costs
18 about \$500,000 from my understanding and only takes
19 about a weekend, which seems very doable. And so how
20 do we make sure that, you know-- you know, how's the
21 DOE and the Administration working on that aspect of
22 the construction to make sure that those are
23 happening in each of our districts? What's the
24 process? How do we access that money or request that
25 money? Because I have 35 public schools that I need

1
2 to, you know, re-design. So if you could speak a
3 little bit.

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Yeah,
5 thank you for that question. This capital plan we're
6 actually in the process of doing 40 more cafeteria
7 enhancement experiences. Just so everyone
8 understands, that is a re-design of the cafeteria
9 service line and where the children eat the food, as
10 well as the cafeteria artwork that goes up. It is
11 not a renovation of the kitchen, but we currently are
12 looking to make sure we're identifying these
13 renovations in all of the TRIE neighborhoods,
14 Taskforce neighborhoods, as well as any future plans
15 that we have for cafeteria enhancement. We'll go by
16 student participation areas of need and areas in
17 socio-economical situations that we would love to be
18 able to increase participation in those schools.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. Thank you.

20 KEVIN MORAN: So, if I could just build
21 on Chris' comments. We're working in partnership
22 with our facilities teams to make these happen with
23 the School Food team. We're already up to 50 from
24 previous plans, to Chris' point where there's like 40
25 in the pipeline. I want to thank the Chair and I

1
2 want to thank the Council for their advocacy for
3 additional funding. We'll more than double that in
4 the next plan, and happening now for the increase in
5 funding. That 50 million means 100 schools that will
6 get this cafeteria enhancement. And one of the
7 things, lessons learned over time, is we're able to
8 learn that sometimes while you're there, it's not
9 much to do the floor tile. It's not much to do the
10 lighting. It's not much to get inside the kitchen and
11 look at some of the ventilation concerns. You know,
12 and the things that we've learned over time on how
13 better the process. So we're super excited about the
14 100 additional, and we will be partnering with you,
15 Chris and team. We're making sure we're doing some
16 local outreach, that if you see a priority and say
17 this Jr. high school, this high school-- we want to
18 partner there and also look for efficiencies on our
19 operation scale, how we make things accessible and
20 other opportunities to use funding streams to better
21 the project along. The second part I heard around
22 ventilation-- I know you mentioned air conditioning
23 for our cafeterias, Chris and I talk about this
24 regularly, and we currently have at least 500, an
25 excess of 500 kitchens that have received-- that have

1
2 functioning air conditioning. We're-- just completed
3 32 since May, last May. We're adding now with
4 additional funding, and thank you again for this, is
5 that we're going to chase out 411 schools in the next
6 couple of years and get those 411. So we're closing
7 on 1,000. The remaining sites that do not have the
8 air conditioning in-- within the kitchen, we're--
9 already started the overview and assessment of what
10 that cost would be, as it is a capital request for a
11 split unit, and they vary from kitchen to kitchen
12 based upon space to roof, space to exterior, where we
13 could put condensers and such, but very much top of
14 mind, and we'll keep you regularly updated as we kind
15 of complete these projects.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much.
17 Next person, Council Member Narcisse?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Good morning
19 and thank you for being here. I would have a lot of
20 questions, but I'm going to have to narrow it down.
21 You know food and health have a direct relation in
22 your body, right? And my community, the district I
23 represent, right now we have the highest in diabetes
24 comparing to the City, 30 percent compared to the
25 City, about 24. Hypertension is killing us. So,

1 since food have a direct relation, so I want to know
2 since we know the high-risk area, the high-risk that
3 we've been talking about, it took the pandemic to
4 highlight it, the problems that have burdened our
5 community, and we cannot go backwards. We have to go
6 forward. And one of the thing that we can do is
7 making sure our children understand the relation with
8 food and the health within the body. So, my whole
9 thing-- first, before I get to my questions. Are the
10 kitchen in our district working? Because I know I
11 visited some, they need to be done. They need to be
12 done over. We need a whole makeover, and the stove
13 not working for some of them, and some of them don't
14 have AC, and if you don't have air conditioner how
15 are you going to cook. Even if it's winter time, you
16 need a proper working kitchen. So having said that,
17 since we know this pandemic has highlighted those
18 problem for us and we know the percentage, so how is
19 the food structure coming to our district? Are they
20 still processing, because I'm hearing that you have
21 great food, but I have visited my school. I have not
22 seen great plate of food or the tray of food. So is
23 that a part? And I heard you say it's throughout the
24 City. We have a set of diets for everyone, right?
25

1
2 So have you seen a decrease in the workers, the
3 kitchen staff post-pandemic?

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: So,
5 definitely post-pandemic. During the height of the
6 pandemic we lost around 2,000 employees. We are now
7 almost back up to the regular staffing levels that we
8 were pre-pandemic. I do want to reiterate that meals
9 should be uniformed across the city. There are menus
10 for the pre-k through eight and there are menus for
11 high school. If there are individual situations and
12 you go visit schools, please let us know immediately.
13 We will go. We will partner with you. We will walk
14 through those schools to make sure we address any
15 issues that are there. Our job is to make sure we
16 are serving nutritious, delicious, and healthy meals
17 at every single school. We also offer salad bars at
18 every single school, either as an actual bar or we're
19 making the actual salads, presenting them to kids,
20 and it is actually menu'd twice a week on our menus,
21 actual salad in addition to the other entrée and the
22 other components of the meal that we get. Very
23 important that we continue to look at products that
24 are lower in sodium, lower in sugar. We no longer
25 serve juice in the morning. We make sure water is

1
2 available every single day in every single cafeteria.
3 Our milk is all low-fat and non-fat. We are always
4 encouraging our cont--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: [interposing] I
6 was getting to that. I guess somebody jump into it.
7 I was getting to that, too. Go ahead, let him.

8 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: We cut--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: [interposing] We
10 don't want chocolate milk for our children. We have
11 to have it decreased. We're not going to go back and
12 forth, Council Member.

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: This Mayor
14 and Chancellor has charged us with making sure we
15 continue to improve our menus to make them healthier
16 every single day. All of our products, we look for
17 healthier products. We have reduced processing of
18 foods. We have reduced processed foods, specifically
19 processed meats on our menu since 2019. We only
20 serve beef once every three weeks. We have two
21 meatless days, and we have Plant Power Fridays. I do
22 want to mention, our Plant Powered Fridays are
23 primarily scratch recipes that are cooked, fresh
24 vegetables, are roasted every single week in the
25 schools. It should be uniformed. If it is not

1
2 uniformed and you see something, let me know. We
3 will personally go out together to make sure we fix
4 all of this. My job is to service every student
5 equally across the City.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: I love that,
7 because I'm going to take you on for that. And if
8 you know me, you should not promise to me, because
9 I'm going to get it.

10 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: I think
11 Chair Joseph can second that I will go out to his
12 school to make sure these things are happening.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Okay, okay.
14 And about staffing for the school aid-- I mean,
15 cafeteria.

16 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: thank you
17 very much for asking that question. Our employees are
18 the most important think to us and the heart of our
19 operations. Not all heroes wear capes, some do wear
20 aprons. We have hiring halls almost every single
21 Saturday. We've had these hiring since the beginning
22 of February. We've interviewed over 3,800 individuals
23 that are looking to work for our organizations. We
24 have hired a good portion of that. We have--
25 obviously, have a rigorous hiring process as well as

1
2 our managers and cooks need to have qualifications,
3 but we are continuing to do this until we return to
4 pre-pandemic levels.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: My time is up.
6 Have you considered to hire locally since it'll be
7 culturally sensitive to the area and the food as
8 well?

9 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Hiring
10 locally?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Locally.

12 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Yes, every
13 single hiring hall we have, I would say 95 percent or
14 more are folks from our community.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Okay.

16 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Most of the
17 folks that work in our kitchens either have children
18 in the schools or work near those kitchens, including
19 what I mentioned before. My mother mostly did it
20 just to watch over me every single day at school.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: So, thank you
22 very much. My time is up. I'll come back
23 [inaudible].

24

25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I'd like to
3 recognize Council Member Restler. Thank you. Next
4 person Council Member De La Rosa?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Thank you. I
6 want to just piggy-back on the comments my colleagues
7 have made about the kitchens. I think it's
8 important. We've heard from union members and
9 workers about the real risk to their health with
10 overheated kitchens, and so I just want to make sure
11 that, you know, that's top priority for this council.
12 And I want to ask a question about inequities. I've
13 been visiting the schools in my district. Some of
14 these buildings are 100 years old, right, which I
15 know it's a problem, but there are some schools that
16 you go and they have a cool kitchen where they can
17 actually cook and then there's school buildings where
18 they can only heat up the food, right? I think that
19 as we look to invest in our school buildings, we need
20 to address those inequities because if we know
21 everything that we know about school which is that
22 most kids get their calories from school. I have an
23 eight-year-old. She's always hungry. She goes to
24 school at eight o'clock in the morning and she's
25 there 'til five o'clock in the afternoon. So, they

1
2 need to have the adequate equipment to be able to
3 actually prepare nutritious food. So, how-- what is
4 the plan for dealing with [inaudible] inequity?

5 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Thank you
6 for that question, and I'm glad you recognized that.
7 It's very important that we continue to have these
8 conversations about the really older buildings with
9 the smaller kitchens and see what the future holds
10 for that.

11 KEVIN MORAN: So, I appreciate the
12 question, and you do point out the varying ages of
13 our structures. My three kids went to an elementary
14 school that was over 100 years old, their junior high
15 school 60 years old, and so we know that there's
16 varying space challenges. We would like to see--
17 meet the schools where they are, see what's
18 available. We just redid a cafeteria at Brownsville
19 Collaborative where we started moving the furn-- if
20 you will, the chillers and the boxes, refrigerators,
21 within the space, and actually taking the adjacent
22 space to create more space for the kitchen and the
23 workers. And so, I think the older designs do limit
24 our ability to have a full functioning kitchen.
25 Certainly new designs and scopes with the School

1
2 Construction Authority allow for such expansion, but
3 I'd like to if there's a site specific that you want
4 to go to, we'd love to partner on solutioning [sic]
5 in real time, because sometimes there is space when
6 our Office of Space Management Team to figure out
7 other spaces where we can move things to create more
8 space, so to speak. So we'll look forward to-- but
9 we acknowledge that is an issue with the older
10 buildings and we'd like to partner on some issues.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Great.

12 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Just to
13 echo briefly, having this conversation and having--
14 and hearing about things about things that you see is
15 really important for us to be able to know and
16 address. So never feel that you can't call us up,
17 email us and ask us questions or ask us to a visit a
18 school where you have concerns.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Okay. I know
20 you don't-- y'all don't know me very well, but I've
21 never shy to call. I will say that one of things I'm
22 concerned about is the hours for lunch. My child,
23 again, you know, they have lunch at 10 o'clock in the
24 morning. They already have breakfast at home and
25 then lunch at 10 o'clock in the morning. The school

1 day ends at 5:00. What are we doing to look at-- and
2 you know, this is not passing blame at all, at the
3 administrators of the school, because clearly they're
4 doing the best they can with having to keep up with
5 pandemic restrictions, having to make sure that kids
6 are spread out. But what can we do to fix this a
7 little bit or tweak the space so that more kids can
8 have lunch at lunchtime?
9

10 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: So, I
11 think there's two things in that question. One is
12 that the amount of space where children eat lunch.
13 Back to what my boss was saying, Kevin, about
14 expanding those conversations and talking about the
15 renovations. But also as a former principal I had
16 three lunch periods. Each lunch period was 50
17 minutes, and I had two grades in that lunch period.
18 One grade would go outside or go into the auditorium
19 while the other grade eats, and I'd have to switch
20 after that. We need to be very creative and continue
21 these conversations with principals, and I think
22 during the pandemic we had to stretch out those lunch
23 periods because of social distancing. We are really
24 excited that come September we're returning to pre-
25 pandemic services where will go back into the

1
2 cafeteria. We'll go back into all the other areas
3 where students were going to hopefully reduce some of
4 those issues that you mentioned.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Carmen De
7 La-- I mean, Council Member De La Rosa. Council
8 Member Louis?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Thank you, Chair,
10 for the opportunity. Good morning. Thank you for
11 joining us. I have a three-part question. One is on
12 cafeteria re-design and the infrastructure
13 implementation component, vegan options and MWBE's.
14 Alright, so the first one is in regards-- and this
15 was mentioned by my colleagues already. But
16 regarding the cafeteria re-design initiative, I
17 wanted to know does that include the infrastructure
18 for the cooking area for our cafeteria workers that
19 you all discussed here, and some of the members
20 brought up earlier. That's the part one question,
21 but there's a part B to that. We-- all of us
22 advocated for capital funds cooking kitchens and
23 cafeteria for all schools. Is that going to be part
24 of the cafeteria re-design component initially that
25 you mentioned today? Because if you get that done on

1
2 a weekend, and we already implemented the funding,
3 can we get that done by the summer, by the end of the
4 summer? So that's the first question. The second
5 question is in regards to [inaudible] rising [sic].
6 So, I saw on here grab-n-go, but I wanted to know
7 would there be a vegan option for [inaudible],
8 students participating in Summer Rising [sic]. And
9 are you all thinking about MWBE vendors for the vegan
10 options that we're trying to implement? So, vegan
11 Fridays, I love the idea. I think our Mayor is
12 amazing, I think, to bring this up. And the kids
13 complained the food wasn't good. Some of it wasn't
14 even vegan. So I wanted to know what does that look
15 like moving forward for your agency, and how could we
16 be helpful in that area? Thank you so much.

17 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Thank you
18 for those questions. All great questions. The
19 cafeteria enhancement experience is only the
20 cafeteria service line and the actually cafeteria
21 where the children sit. It does not include any
22 infrastructure work that needs to be done in the
23 kitchen. It doesn't mean that we realize that some
24 of that work does need to be completed and renovated
25 as my-- as Kevin mentioned about these older aging

1 buildings. What we do in a weekend is we replace the
2 service line with new equipment, new self-service
3 equipment, new tables, and we partner with students
4 to create what that atmosphere will look like,
5 including artwork that's on the walls. It does not
6 include kitchen infrastructure. Two, Summer Rising
7 [sic], our menus are always meatless on Monday and
8 plant powered on Friday. The combination of the two
9 questions, our Friday main entrée is a scratched cook
10 plant powered vegan option. There are always other
11 options, vegetarian options, available on Friday for
12 students that may not want that individual vegan item
13 that is plant powered. So, I know you said not all
14 options are vegan, because they're not. We always
15 allow students to have that option, but our main
16 center of the plate will always be that plant powered
17 vegan option. We always want to give students
18 choices to be able to make some decisions for
19 themselves or at least talk to their parents about
20 those decisions. We communicated that, but I think
21 I, we, my team at the Department needs to do a little
22 bit better job on the menu. Next year, in September,
23 you will see that clearly pointed out in the menu so
24 there is no confusion around the options that are
25

1
2 there. But I do want to reiterate, every day there
3 are alternative options. On Mondays that are
4 meatless, there are meatless alternative options for
5 students to take, not just the main option that's
6 there, and on Friday, there are a whole bunch of
7 different options on our menu, bottom right box in
8 blue and white font. You'll see all of the actual
9 options that are available. One of our stars is this
10 chickpea Mediterranean wrap that is a vegan entre
11 that is absolutely delicious.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: You sound like you
13 like that one a lot. It sounds like you like that
14 one a lot, so I hope you're enjoying it.

15 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Yes, that
16 is correct.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: And how can we
18 ensure everything that you just shared about Mondays
19 and Fridays and different options? How could your
20 agency and the council communicate that better so
21 that it's across the board universal, that it's
22 available?

23 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: One, I
24 hold myself and my team accountable to make sure that
25 dos happen in every single school in every single

1 school on every single day we stay on menu, but it's
2 always good to have feedback from the community,
3 including our relationships with principals and
4 principals in charge during Summer Rising or the
5 public feeding sites. We rely on eyes and ears
6 throughout the entire school, and as mentioned
7 earlier, the more feedback we get, the better it is.
8 We are as transparent as possible. Our menus are
9 public on the website for a reason. If someone sees
10 something that is not on the menu, I need it to be
11 told to my office. But there are situations and
12 circumstances where supply chain or other things may
13 happen. We may get shorted from a vendor, etcetera,
14 but we will always address it. The MWBE
15 conversation, that is written. That language is
16 written into every single contract that we write, and
17 we look for that option as well as the local option,
18 and all future contracts that we are going into.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Council Member
21 Menin?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Thank you, Chair
23 Joseph. So, I have a number of questions. for the
24 summer meal programs, given that it's starting on
25 June 28th, have you all sent out notice, and in how

1
2 many languages are you sending notice out, and what
3 is the form of the notice?

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Thank you
5 much for asking that question. As per the City
6 Council law, we are required to post all the summer
7 location by June 1st. That was posted by May 27th. In
8 addition to that, we are actually sending home a
9 letter. Each principal has a letter that will be
10 back-packed to students before the last day of
11 school, by the 20th in this envelope. In this
12 envelope it actually has the nine languages that are
13 translated for folks to find the summer sites. The
14 letter also says the three closest sites. If their
15 building is not open. It'll be listed here for
16 parents to go and find it. We always encourage folks
17 to look on our website, on our web page, the summer
18 look-up tool that'll give the most accurate data for
19 the number of sites that are closest in that zip
20 code.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay. One
22 question on procurement. Why does the DOE policy
23 require distributors to directly purchase the
24 Departments food, but DOE, as I understand it, it's
25 choosing the food product. So my concern is that

1
2 it's really-- as the Comptroller's 2021 report
3 indicates it's cutting down on both competition, and
4 it's really creating an issue regarding transparency.

5 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Great
6 question. We create the spec [sic] of the type of
7 food we want based on the USDA requirements and the
8 New York City Department of Health requirements.
9 Yes, we have three main distributors and that
10 contract goes until the end of 2024, but in the past
11 three years we have prioritized contract-direct
12 relationships which answered a lot of the
13 Comptroller's concerns in that investigation. We
14 want to go more contract-direct, but we always have
15 to keep a safety net to make sure we have the
16 availability of food to make sure we never miss a
17 meal. We always have the supply. We always have the
18 inventory and we always have an intense large product
19 basket to make sure we meet the reimbursable national
20 program standards every single day.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: So, do you feel
22 that you have answered the Comptroller's concerns
23 adequately?

24 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: One
25 hundred percent. That letter was written and the

1
2 investigation was done, I believe, towards the end of
3 17-18. Ever since then we have been working on all
4 of the things that were identified through a part of
5 that conversation to make sure we are moving in the
6 right direction as a department in the City.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: It would-- I think
8 it would be helpful if I could ask Chair if we could
9 get information on that to the committee, because I
10 think the Comptroller raised some really important
11 issues. So it'd be great to have that data.

12 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Would
13 love to.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: For the scratch
15 cooking pilot program, are you going to be expanding
16 it and into what neighborhoods if you are?

17 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Great
18 question, and it has come up in multiple
19 conversations. Currently, and since the pilot, we
20 have two main sites in the Bronx, one at Morris
21 Campus which has multiple schools in it, and another
22 at 218 in the Bronx. We quickly learned that not all
23 kitchens, because of the size and infrastructure, can
24 do scratch cooking from the beginning. What we did
25 learn from those two sites is that we could create

1
2 recipes and use those two sites in the Bronx as test
3 kitchens to be able to create recipes and have them
4 on every menu in every school. We actually have
5 scratch recipes that were created at those two sites
6 that are on the menu every single day. We have
7 several options, including the options that are on
8 plant powered Fridays. Some of our roasted vegetable
9 recipes, some of our pasta recipes are actually
10 created at the scratch kitchen and then put on our
11 menus citywide. At the moment, we don't have any
12 plans to expand infrastructure, but we continue to
13 have plans to expand scratch recipes across all
14 schools and on every menu in the City.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: The number of
16 food-insecure children in the city, as you know, is
17 one in four. So what are the Administration's
18 overall plans to address food insecurity?

19 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: I think
20 the most important part to answer that question is to
21 continue to promote our menus, talk about our menus,
22 talk to school communities, engage the school
23 communities, engage stakeholders about what we do and
24 what we provide in schools to make sure all parents
25

1
2 and children are aware of the free meals that we
3 offer for breakfast/lunch, snack, and dinner.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council
6 Member. Council Member Abreu?

7 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: Thank you, Chair
8 Joseph. So, I just want to revisit the part of
9 excessive heating and the lack of air conditioning.
10 As you know, that has a huge impact on the
11 preparation of food, but also causes unhealthy work
12 conditions for school workers. How many school
13 kitchens currently lack air conditioning?

14 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: A couple
15 of things, and then I'm going to ask Kevin to jump in
16 there as well. The health and wellbeing of our
17 workers is the most important thing.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: Do you have a
19 number?

20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Yes, I do.
21 Currently, as Kevin mentioned, we have over 500
22 school kitchens that are air conditioned, but I also
23 want to make sure folks know that when it is hot, we
24 do shut the ovens off. It is policy to turn the
25 ovens off and go to a cold menu to protect our

1
2 workers. The other thing, too, is we ask them to
3 move out of the kitchen to prepare meals to make sure
4 there's alternative space in and around the cafeteria
5 and the kitchen to be able to do that where the ovens
6 are not and where there is better ventilation. As
7 far as the air conditioning question, I'm going to
8 ask Kevin.

9 KEVIN MORAN: Yeah, so I'd start with--
10 thank you, Council Member, for the question. I'd
11 start with the prioritization in the summer months is
12 to target the schools that have air conditioning. So
13 in the hottest stretches of the year that we're in
14 air conditioned environments. To Chris' point, we do
15 dial back the heat generating appliances within the
16 kitchen when needed. Knowing that we're over 500
17 that have the air condition, I want to revisit just
18 thanking the Council for their advocacy for the
19 additional monies. The Chancellor is very clear on
20 asking sure work environments are where they should
21 be for our workers. We very much value them, thank
22 them every day for their service. So, those 411
23 sites, we're going to get to as fast as we can. We
24 just completed since May 30 two of those. I visit
25 regularly with Chris, and it really does make a

1
2 difference within the kitchen spaces. We do identify
3 that there are sites that are complex that lack
4 windows, where the current ventilation could be
5 improved, but through a different system and not
6 necessarily a split unit configuration that may work
7 there may not work elsewhere, or a window unit may
8 work there may not work elsewhere. So we're
9 definitely going to come back to the Council and kind
10 of-- pacing where we are to getting every single
11 school kitchen to a place where it's comfortable. I
12 would say we're building off the successes of the AC
13 for All initiative where every instructional space
14 was identified was air conditioned, and thank you for
15 the Council for years of advocating for that. Now,
16 moving to non-instructional spaces as we-- we're
17 going to focus that next and sure I'll get back to
18 you.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: Thank you. I have
20 three more questions. So I just want to get through
21 my time. By the way, I'm a big fan of the
22 Chancellor, so. What is the average cost of
23 installing the air conditioning in the kitchen, if
24 you have that?

25

1
2 KEVIN MORAN: Yeah, window units are less
3 expensive. So you could have a scenario where you're
4 looking at 5,000 dollars for window [sic] frame
5 insulation, electric and that. There could be
6 instances where you're looking at 100,000 dollar
7 installation where a split-unit or condenser needs to
8 go, [inaudible] goes on the roof or exterior of
9 building, you may have seen some of those. I'm not a
10 huge fan [inaudible] prefer, but the longer the run,
11 the third or fourth, five stories buildings it's more
12 expensive-- cost prohibitive. So, they could
13 arrange--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: [interposing] You
15 would say in what range?

16 KEVIN MORAN: The window units range
17 [inaudible]

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: Thank you. What
19 does-- does DOE have plans to install air
20 conditioning every school kitchen? If not, why not?
21 If you could speak to the short-term and long-term
22 plan to prevent overheated kitchens this summer.

23 KEVIN MORAN: Absolutely. Goal setting
24 to getting to a place where every kitchen is
25 comfortable for all our workers. So, we are on pace

1 with identifying and evaluating every site. We'll
2 have a report on cost and execution, but absolutely
3 it is a goal of ours.

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: And just
5 to make a point, kitchens that are historically hot,
6 we are not using them for the summer. We want to use
7 kitchens that have the air conditioners, and we
8 always make arrangements to try to make sure that
9 happens.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: Thank you so much.
11 [inaudible] My questions with a minute left.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council
13 Member. I'd like to recognize Council Member Genarro
14 and Council Member Ung. Next person is Council Member
15 Gutiérrez.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Hi, thank you.
17 I just want to confirm, I-- when we were discussing
18 plant powered Fridays, did you mention that on plant
19 powered Friday's all meals are scratch cooked?

20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: The main
21 entrees that we have that are shown on our menu for
22 plant powered Fridays come from scratch recipes, yes.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, that
24 didn't--
25

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO:

[interposing] There are other options that are available that are not scratch, but the main entrée that is presented on the menu comes from a scratch recipe.

COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: But that doesn't imply-- that implies that then every school has that--

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO:

[interposing] Every single school that you see the menu option listed is the same across the city. So if rice and plantain power bowl is listed, it will be the same in every single school.

COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, so every school has access to scratch cooked meals.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Scratch recipes, yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Scratch recipes, okay. Can you share what the cost of school lunch is, what's the cost to prepare it?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Without labor it's around four dollars.

COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Without labor it's four dollars. And what do you think an increase

1
2 to that, how would it impact the variety or the
3 quality of school lunches? Let's say an increase of
4 a dollar or two from y'all.

5 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: I think
6 that allows us to explore other options and explore
7 things that might be more favorable to students.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: So,
9 considering we've had an extensive conversation on
10 feedback, I think like a lot of my colleagues have
11 been meeting with schools, speaking with students
12 with even the staff, and I'm just curious to know,
13 I'm aware-- I know that there's extensive testing
14 done in research labs on school meals, and you are--
15 the DOE is really forward about feedback from
16 students, but I still-- kids are still complaining,
17 right? They're still unwilling to eat the food. I
18 know for a fact like just last week kids said, like,
19 well, they just don't eat, right? It could be a
20 myriad of reasons. I'm not blaming it entirely on the
21 food, but what do you see as the main challenges on
22 those areas? When you're getting feedback from kids
23 from us here, what are some of the challenges that
24 you're hearing, and what are you all planning for the
25 future to solve for that?

1
2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: I think
3 some of the most important things we need to do is to
4 continue to engage stakeholders, and our stakeholders
5 here are the school communities as well as students.
6 We need to be in every single school. We're going to
7 be doing that in the fall, meeting with PTAs, meeting
8 with school leadership teams, meeting with students
9 to make sure they understand the menu, but we're also
10 talking more to principals and school administrations
11 to help promote our meals in the schools. I'll give
12 you an example. As principal, I had a child read the
13 100 percent attendance every single day of all the
14 classes and talk about the menu choices. I was in
15 district 32 in Bushwick, and I wanted to make sure
16 that the kids understood what was being served and
17 they had knowledge of that. But also, as a
18 principal, I went down to the lunch room and I ate
19 with my students. I think when we start to get more
20 into that and we have the school administration,
21 parents and students together and having the same
22 conversation, we do increase participation across the
23 board. I'm very proud to say that we still are
24 serving over 800,000 meals per day, and I think
25 that's important to recognize, especially given the

1
2 hard work that our folks are doing, that students are
3 actually eating the meals and enjoying the meals.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Yeah. So I
5 love that you rep your district. I represent School
6 District 32, actually in one of my schools in
7 Bushwick where I had heard from students that they
8 were choosing not to eat. Some of the staff on
9 Fridays, we just make plantains, because that's the
10 only thing that students will eat. So I appreciate
11 what you're saying, and I know-- what school were you
12 at?

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: I was a
14 teacher at PS 274 for about five years--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: [interposing]
16 that's so cool, in my district.

17 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Assistant
18 Principal there, and then Principal at 75 for about
19 10 years.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Also in my
21 district, fantastic.

22 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: You can
23 tell me the school where you went where the kids are
24 saying they're not eating, I'd love to go and visit.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: I'll tell you
3 offline. But I appreciate that. And I was in
4 school, actually, when plantains were integrated into
5 the school lunch, and I can't tell you how-- you
6 know, that really changed the way that I approached
7 food, and so I just would love to see it more of an
8 expansion, and that's why I appreciate what you're
9 saying as far as outreach. So my last question is
10 related to summer meals, and I think during the
11 pandemic this really was a game-changer for our
12 families. One of the things I really loved to see was
13 that students could pick up and go, but also it was
14 available to their caregivers, to their parents as
15 well. I know that that's not something that looks
16 like it's in the budget, but is this-- is this a
17 concept that the DOE is looking at as a means to
18 combat food insecurity when we're offering free meals
19 to our students, that we continue to make it
20 available to their caregivers, their families as
21 well?

22 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: We were
23 extremely proud and honored to be able to serve New
24 York City children and adults alike during the
25 pandemic. Once we returned to in-person learning, we

1
2 transitioned the food public meal service to the
3 City's robust food pantries throughout the City. We
4 do have links on our website as well as the DSS
5 website, which will give parents access to the food
6 that they need.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Fantastic.

8 And then my last question, going off a little bit of
9 what Council Member Menin was asking about the
10 outreach. The sites you said should have been up by
11 May 27th. Are they--

12 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: There was
13 a spreadsheet up by May 27th, and as of this morning,
14 the look-up tool was active. When you go on our web
15 page, all you need to do is put your zip code in, and
16 then all of the sites within that zip code will come
17 up, not just schools, but pools, park, NYCHA's
18 developments, libraries will all be included in that.
19 I do want to make sure that everyone understands,
20 we're continuing to do outreach to our folks and to
21 other city agencies to continue to increase the
22 number of sites that will be serving meals throughout
23 the summer.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, you said
25 just today-- I'm sorry, I know I'm over time. I

1
2 checked this morning and it says no data available,
3 but it sounds like some of the stuff is happening--

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO:

5 [interposing] Yeah, I checked. I don't want to
6 disagree with you, but I checked last night and I put
7 in zip code 11017 and it all came up, but I will-- as
8 soon as this over--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: [interposing]

10 Yeah.

11 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: we can go
12 on my phone and take a look.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: I appreciate.
14 Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council
16 Member. Council Member Brewer?

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very
18 much. I've spent about 100 hours with these two over
19 the years. So I appreciate the work that you're
20 doing. The issue is-- I know you heard earlier about
21 the cooking versus warming capacity. Do you have
22 like the metrics so we would know which school is
23 which because one suggestion, a, it should go up on
24 Open Data-- my bill, of course. But second, I think
25 would help us because we asked for bathrooms,

1
2 electrical, God knows what, and we could help with
3 the renovation of those kitchens if needed. So, it
4 would be good to have that up on the data point,
5 which is warming and which is scratch, and what we
6 can do to help. I never heard anybody ask. The
7 Principals don't focus on food. I'm going to be
8 honest with you. We do. You do. So we need that.
9 Also, how many schools have functioning dishwashers?
10 How many have, what I want, are the apple cutters? I
11 mean, I know those are silly, but what-- do you have
12 those metrics? Dishwashers?

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Yeah, I
14 don't have them in front of me, but I can definitely
15 get them to you.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, and then
17 the deli-- what I call deli-style. How many schools
18 have that, which I pay for brand dice [sic]? Is that
19 something that is helpful? How many have it,
20 etcetera?

21 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Council
22 Member, that C [sic] initiative actually. So the
23 deli-style service is part of the C initiative. So
24 that is part of our expansion. And any new school
25 that is built--

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] I'm
3 talking about the old schools. I don't hold no damn
4 new schools. I'm talking about the old schools.

5 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Yeah,
6 combination of both. We got the 50 million to do 100
7 more C deli-style, but also new schools that are
8 built, we're always installing--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] I
10 don't care about new schools. Manhattan doesn't have
11 too many new schools. So, the deli-style will be
12 going into every current school?

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Our plan
14 is to do every middle school and high school with any
15 funding that can come, and of course, we thank the
16 Council for the 50 million that's coming, and of
17 course, we're going to love to partner with you to
18 try to get more.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, so I need
20 that data on dishwashers, warming, scratch.

21 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: We have it
22 all.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And I want apple
24 cutters. Nobody eats a whole apple. I've been saying
25 that for 20 years.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO:

Understood.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you. I

bought two, but you could buy some also. The issue of-- this is, obviously, I'm a, as you know, a Nancy Eaton [sp?] fan big time.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: [inaudible]

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And the issue is

how do you support a chef coalition to design menus and provide training for school cooks? You have great, great staff. I know them. But are you out doing that kind of outreach to see if there are other coalitions that could help with some of the designing of the menus and training?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Thank you

very much for that. We actually partner closely with Wits [sp?] as well as the Coalition for Healthy School Food. We now have cook ambassadors, one in every district, which comes from the model from Nancy Easton and her team. They will help train those cook ambassadors to help train the individual cooks that are in every single kitchen that we have.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, and then

what happens with the Friday-- we heard earlier about

1
2 the-- you're doing that-- I'm not big on healthy food
3 or anything, just so you know. I like fresh food.
4 I'm telling you right now I like fresh food. The
5 Mayor and I have had this disagreement for many
6 years. I like fresh food. So the question is-- you
7 and I have been up to Orange County. We've been to
8 the black dirt lettuce. We've been all these
9 different places together. So my question is what
10 are we doing about working with Grow NYC, Cornell,
11 etcetera. I know we have certain days, but to be
12 honest with you the food metrics report, which I read
13 religiously has-- indicates that the local dairy and
14 produce to DOE has reduced a lot from 2018 to 2021.
15 Now, I know it's hard sometimes to buy locally, but
16 to me, that makes the food what-- appetizing to me
17 and to every school child. So what are doing about
18 this issue that I, again, have been talking about for
19 20 years?

20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: I
21 appreciate those concerns, and we look to address all
22 of those, especially now that we are coming out of
23 the pandemic. I think during the pandemic--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] We
25 didn't do it before the pandemic, Chris.

1
2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: We are
3 looking to increase all of our local spend as well as
4 looking to increase all fresh vegetables from salad
5 bars--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] How
7 are we doing that? I'm sorry. How are we actually
8 trying to increase those metrics?

9 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: So, we're
10 looking to have contracts that call out language for
11 local vendors.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, because
13 right now it's just "could", not mandated. Is there
14 some way we could make it mandated that we purchase
15 locally?

16 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Would love
17 to continue this conversation with broader folks--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] this
19 is 20 years discussing this. He and I have been
20 going back and forth. The final-- the final issue is
21 just in terms of the food-- you know, you talked
22 about training, I know you mentioned that, but how
23 exactly does that take place in the schools, the
24 training. How do you-- working on this training
25 program? Just can you be more specific?

1
2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Yes,
3 that's a great question. Prior to the pandemic, we
4 brought everyone to headquarters from across the
5 City. This was 1,600 cooks coming throughout the
6 weeks, throughout the months to do training. We
7 realized that during the pandemic, we need to go to
8 the schools. So we are now training one cook
9 ambassador, which will be the head cook in every
10 single district, which will then go into each of the
11 schools in the district to help train the cooks that
12 are in the schools.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. I could go
14 on and on, but thank you very much. I think the Feds
15 are also not helpful in terms of some of their
16 allocations. I know you said four dollars, but there
17 was an article in the paper the other day that the
18 Feds are being challenging. Are you able to work on
19 that? They're trying to hurt-- I don't know if it's
20 New York, but around the country in terms of cutting.

21 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: We'd love
22 to continue those conversations.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Ah-ha, thank you
24 very much.

25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council
3 Member Brewer. Council Member Hanif?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you. First
5 I just want to thank you for meeting with me earlier
6 this year to help me better understand the halal food
7 expansion work in our schools. Growing up, going to
8 public schools in this city, I didn't have the
9 opportunity to like rejoice in the amount of food
10 options that we have now, and I remember Muslim kids
11 and I at PS230 we would need to tag team when there
12 was pepperoni on the pizza and when there were ham
13 sandwiches. And they weren't labeled, and so we had
14 to do our best to determine which day we were almost
15 about to eat pork, and then to understand why that
16 was happening. So we're at a really unique place in
17 our city in recognizing what food justice means. And
18 so really hats off to the advocacy that took place,
19 and particularly by Muslim families to bring about
20 the expansion which is now a permanent program. And
21 so I'm really excited by the expansion. I know that
22 you mentioned that there are many more schools in the
23 process of certifying. Are you able to provide us
24 with a list of those schools? And in particular
25 would love to know PS230, where I went to school,

1
2 what's the status with that school, and if you all
3 are doing proactive outreach to ensure that schools
4 know that this is possible.

5 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Thank you
6 for those questions, and you're welcome for that
7 visit that you and I had over Zoom, and it was a
8 learning experiment for us well. One, I have to
9 thank the Council for just helping us create the
10 halal and kosher pilot that we did way back then,
11 because this would not exist if it wasn't for the
12 partnership of the Council. We are now in the middle
13 of certifying 15 additional kitchens that will be in-
14 service come September 2022, but we also are meeting
15 with all community education councils, PTA, school
16 leadership teams to get the word out about our
17 program. And one of the other-- one of the things
18 that is a requirement for my staff when they go to
19 meet with schools is to talk about all of the options
20 and halal and kosher are options there to continue to
21 get the word out. We want to make sure that the
22 Chancellor's vision about engaging stakeholders and
23 engaging school communities stays. So any time this
24 conversation about any option, including halal, comes
25 up, we want to make sure the school community has a

1
2 conversation with the administration of the building,
3 and that we are contacted and start the process from
4 there. We want to get this information out as much
5 as possible, and I think we've done a great job this
6 year in increasing the number of sites, but we are
7 open to conversations about more sites within the
8 City.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And do you have
10 anything specific about PS230 at this moment?

11 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: I will get
12 back to you, I promise you.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: I look forward to
14 that. I mean, it was really great to learn that over
15 the last decade we have stopped using pork products.
16 We no longer are providing fried foods. I think this
17 is an interesting shift, and again, speaks to the
18 food justice work that is so necessary at this time.
19 Is there curriculum about the fact that there are all
20 of these options? Like, are children learning what
21 it means to have halal food and kosher food, vegan
22 options, meatless Mondays. Is that being-- is that
23 something that they're learning in the process of
24 their lunches.

1
2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Going
3 forward, we have a Principal's Guide that's available
4 for all principals that talks about all of our
5 options. We ask our staff when they're going to have
6 these stakeholder and community engagement meetings
7 to talk about all of those options. And one of the
8 things we're expecting to happen after that is the
9 principals and the teachers talk about what's
10 happening within the school lunch room. But then
11 there's a different component which I think is the
12 nutrition education piece, which lives within the
13 Office of Wellness, which I know they're tapping into
14 all of the things that we're doing within the school
15 food kitchens.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: So right now,
17 like, in the school curriculum there isn't something
18 built in where people are learning, oh, halal means
19 this and kosher means that, and here's what these
20 options--

21 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO:
22 [interposing] I don't--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: [interposing] Okay.

24 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: I'm not
25 sure.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And then, I don't
3 think I caught this, but how many schools have
4 community gardens?

5 KEVIN MORAN: 952.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And then is there
7 an option for families to take home fresh produce?
8 Like, how does the community garden work?

9 KEVIN MORAN: So each site varies. I'd
10 like to-- depending on the proximity. Some are within
11 the-- the hydroponics are nested within classrooms.
12 Some are raised bed outside where there's access,
13 where it's open at certain hours, closed at certain
14 hours. Sharing and distributing, we'll get back to
15 you on terms of what is available to the community
16 at-large.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Yeah, I was just
18 curious. Given the scope of food insecurity,
19 wondering if the community gardens have been an
20 outlet for families to take home vegetables and/or is
21 that something that we can pilot to ensure that
22 families are able to take home food, or young people
23 at any given day beyond eating in the schools are
24 able to take home something?

1
2 KEVIN MORAN: Yeah, and as a follow-up,
3 that's a great question. I'll make sure I get back
4 to you on process and distribution to be sure.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you so much.
6 And I was excited to hear about the rooftop access as
7 a potential space for gardening. Would love to know
8 how many schools-- how many schools are being
9 utilized for this.

10 KEVIN MORAN: I'd say on the top line on
11 rooftops it's complicated with the multiple means of
12 egress and the way things we have to develop, but
13 it's very affordable to do something on ground in
14 raised planter beds. That's quick and easy, but I'll
15 definitely get back to you on the number of rooftop
16 installations we have currently.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Great. And I'd
18 love the breakdown to be by school district. Thank
19 you. That's all I have.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council
21 Member. Council Member Avilés?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: [inaudible]
23 hello, good afternoon. So I guess I have a couple of
24 different kind of questions. We talked a little bit
25 about the hiring halls. I was curious if you could

1
2 tell us how many vacancies we have and also what are
3 the average wages for these positions?

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: So, I
5 would say approximately about 500 vacancies we have
6 across the City right now. That includes school
7 lunch helpers, heavy-duty persons and cooks in the
8 school, and the average wage for a school lunch
9 helper is \$17 dollars and change an hour.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: And has there
11 been any consideration around increasing that wage to
12 attract people that cannot live in New York City on
13 17 dollars an hour?

14 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: We work
15 really close with our partners in the 372 Local DC37
16 and are having these conversations currently.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: In terms of-- we
18 definitely like to consider those conversations.
19 Clearly, with the increase in cost of everything in
20 New York City, particularly housing, and wages that
21 are not increasing nearly that much, this is a
22 serious issue for all of us, and we want to retain our
23 New Yorkers with living wage jobs. So, in terms of--
24 in terms of the school food contracts, I represent
25 District 38 in South Brooklyn, and we have a company,

1
2 the Preferred Meals Systems, also called the Marimott
3 [sp?] Corporation, which has certainly a history with
4 the City. We were just informed as of May that the
5 company is closing, and there intention is to lay off
6 all 300 employees, most who live in my district.
7 However, their contract seems to be ending the
8 following year. Do you have any information that you
9 can offer us that we can help our residents?

10 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Yes, we're
11 aware of the situation with Marimott Preferred Food.
12 Obviously, there was a national conversation about
13 this as well. We are in the talks and working
14 towards making sure there is zero disruption to food
15 service that was coming out of Marimott. I can have
16 more information for you later on, hopefully this
17 month, but we are working to ensure that we will have
18 no disruption to meal service coming out of Marimott.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Great. I am
20 clearly concerned about disruption of meal service to
21 our students and other entities that depend on that
22 work, but I'm even more concerned about the workers
23 who will just be let go in this economy and have no
24 place to go. Also-- so I'd love to follow up with
25 you on that. So, I'm a long-time mom, PTA mom who

1
2 ran around many public schools. It drove me crazy
3 that there was practice that if a child was served a
4 tray of something and they only wanted the apple on
5 the tray, the worker could only give them the full
6 tray, and they would take the apple and they would
7 dump the rest of the food in the trash. Is this
8 still a practice?

9 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: That's a
10 great question, question that comes up often. The
11 USDA regulation mandates in order to get reimbursed
12 for a meal, which we're part of the School Food
13 Authority in the USDA, we need to serve-- excuse me,
14 we need to mandate and serve three components, but we
15 offer up to five components. So, three components
16 must be on the tray every single time a student takes
17 a meal, and we then get reimbursed for that. If the
18 student does not take the mandated three components,
19 the City does not get reimbursed for the meal.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: So, is there any
21 way to address that we are just throwing perfectly
22 good food in the trash, because we are stuck serving
23 three components that are not going to be used?

24 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: I
25 appreciate that question, and actually there's been

1
2 conversations going on for the past several years,
3 and starting this fall we'll have a small pilot
4 program that we will be able to donate some of this
5 food locally to food pantries. It will start very
6 small, but it's something that we've been working
7 throughout the pandemic to be able to do this. As a
8 former principal, I also set up share tables within
9 my cafeteria where food can be stored safely and then
10 giving out afterwards. It is a practice that we rely
11 on schools to be able to do because we need to make
12 sure the food temperature stays safe, or if it's
13 something that doesn't need to be refrigerated, it's
14 even better, but we are working on that to be able to
15 reduce waste within the schools.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Great. We-- I
17 think given the food insecurity that we see across
18 the City, and this was several years back, and it's
19 particularly egregious to watch perfectly good food
20 being tossed in the trash for no reason other than an
21 arbitrary contract by the Federal Government. So,
22 I'd love to work with you more about that. We should
23 be rescuing food 100 percent. There should be no
24 throwing of perfectly good food into the trash. In
25 terms of-- actually, with school gardens-- this might

1
2 be old news. I wanted to know if this was the fill
3 [sic] practice. Vegetables that were grown in school
4 gardens, the students were not allowed to take them
5 home in many cases, and this was a couple years back
6 so I don't know if this is old news. I'd love for you
7 to verify. Are schools,-- are children able to now
8 eat those vegetables that are grown and given to
9 their families?

10 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: I think--
11 yeah, Kevin's going to speak a little bit about it,
12 though. But I've personally been to schools where
13 I've seen it go home. I've seen--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: [interposing] I
15 know teachers would be like take it, but at the time
16 it wasn't allowed, and I just don't know if that was
17 a particular situation or generally there's
18 particular permissions that need to be had around it.

19 KEVIN MORAN: The harvesting and the
20 distribution of the food underpins that program. So
21 I don't know if there's a place that would be
22 preventing that from happening, but I'll follow up
23 for sure. And if you have specific example, I'll go
24 right to the school, but this is very important to
25 the sustainability of the program.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Absolutely,
3 great. I'll follow up, and it might be, again, old
4 news. Chair, just one more quick question. In terms
5 of hydroponic gardens, how many hydroponic gardens do
6 we have in public schools? And I'd love to know,
7 obviously, off the record what that looks like in my
8 district.

9 KEVIN MORAN: I don't know if I have the
10 exact number of the hydroponics. Let me look, but if
11 not I can definitely get it to you. That's expanding
12 and something that's very popular. It's actually
13 affordable and it's easier than raised planter beds,
14 and it's within our control directly day to day. But
15 I'll get you the accurate number on those labs now.

16 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: And that
17 number was included in the total number of gardens
18 [inaudible].

19 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Great. I think
20 one of the challenges we saw with the gardens was it
21 100 percent depended on parent participation, working
22 class communities where parents are working all day.
23 They don't have time to garden. And so we saw the
24 very immediate inequity happening in schools across
25 the district where you had available partners having

1
2 beautiful gardens and schools that did not have that
3 luxury have no gardens, and teaches hustling to do
4 classwork with children and try to introduce gardens
5 as well. So I would love to learn a little bit more
6 about what's the plan to really support gardening and
7 sustainability efforts equitably across the City.
8 Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council
10 Member. Council Member Stevens?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Hi, good
12 afternoon. I just have-- and I'm sorry if this has
13 already been asked. But one of the questions that I
14 have, because especially in black and brown
15 communities, a lot of us are lactose intolerant, but
16 milk is the main source of drink for young people,
17 which I do not understand. Can we talk about what
18 does that look like for transition? I know at some
19 schools, especially some of the newer ones, they have
20 like water stations and stuff like that, but what are
21 some of the other options, because I think it's crazy
22 that we're still giving children milk.

23 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: That's a
24 great question. To be clear, milk is offered with
25 every single meal, not mandated. So students always

1
2 should have the option of fresh water inside of the
3 cafeteria, either through a water fountain, a bottle
4 filler, or a water jet, which are those water
5 coolers. Our mission is to make sure we get water
6 jets on every single school food cafeteria service
7 line, but if there are brand new water fillers with
8 water fountains in there, we can supplement there.
9 We are exploring, and we'd love to continue this
10 conversation possibly with the Council around
11 funding, about what alternatives to milk might look
12 like in the future.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Yeah, I think
14 that's important. We have to start having this
15 conversation, because to me it's crazy. So many
16 children are lactose intolerant, and even to say a
17 water fountain-- if you're eating your lunch there's
18 not cups provided, like those things. So I think
19 that we need to really start thinking about what
20 those options really look like. We have children who
21 drink the milk because they don't have other options,
22 and then their stomach is upset for the rest of the
23 day. And it's never addressed, even with the cereal.
24 There's always a dairy option. There's no like oat
25 milk or almond milk or anything else offered, and

1
2 there's a huge insecurities with young people, and so
3 we have to be able to give them options on things
4 like that. So I think we definitely need to be
5 looking into what that looks like to transition that
6 out. Another question that I had was around like
7 after school programs. One of the issues that I have
8 been a part of and continue to hear issues of, if you
9 don't have a minimum of 75 students in your program,
10 you are not able to get hot meals, and so you get
11 cold meals. This is something that I think we need
12 to start talking about as well. I have programs,
13 especially because of the pandemic, their numbers got
14 decrease and you know, students weren't there and so
15 they were only offered cold meals. We know that a
16 lot of times these-- this is the last meal that a
17 young person might have for the day, and sometimes
18 it's just a snack. So could we talk about what that
19 looks like, about what that transition could look
20 like? How do we address this? Because I think this
21 is a major issue in the community.

22 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: You are
23 correct. You need specific number to receive the hot
24 dinner option. I'd love to continue this
25 conversation about what it looks like going forward.

1
2 Obviously, this has a staffing impact. We would need
3 the additional staff to stay afterwards. Snack, the
4 cold snack that you're referencing really is packed
5 by my employed during the day and then handed out
6 usually by someone from the after school program.
7 Hot meals, we require staff to be there, food safety
8 temperature, as well as having a food safety handling
9 certificate which is required any time hot meals are
10 being served. But I'd love to explore and continue
11 this conversation with you and the Council.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: No, yeah, I
13 think it's just really important especially because
14 if you go to a community center they'll have a hot
15 food option, and then if you're in the school they
16 have cold food options, and it becomes a real
17 disparity, because a lot of our families actually
18 depend on their young people to be fed in after
19 school. So I think that that's really important. And
20 I just had a follow-up question from Council Member
21 Hanif where she was talking about the halal meals. I
22 have a very large growing Muslim population in my
23 district, and just wondering what does the selection
24 process look like for the halal meal? And like, do
25 parents have to, you know, reach out, or what does

1
2 that look like in order to start that process to get
3 those options in schools.

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: There's
5 definitely not a selection process. The school
6 community and the school Administration are
7 interested in having halal meals in their school, all
8 they have to do is make the request. But I just want
9 to echo again what I said before is that the
10 Chancellor requires and really wants to engage
11 stakeholders in the community. So we require a
12 principal to talk to the parent population at the
13 school to make sure this is a choice they want to do.
14 But I also want to say that the halal options in the
15 schools--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: [interposing]
17 Sorry, I just have a question.

18 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: sure.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: So, why do we
20 have to have the principal engage parents? Because
21 other folks don't have to engage parents for other
22 food options. So, shouldn't it just be something
23 where it's like, okay, this is a request that we
24 should have because they see a growing population?
25

1
2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: We want to
3 make school that the school community is on the same
4 page with the request that they're making because
5 there are some changes that we have to make,
6 including bringing Imams into the school, certify the
7 kitchen and train the staff, and then we receive a
8 certificate from the specific organization that we
9 partner with. We just want to make sure that all
10 parents are aware that this is happening in the
11 school, and that is usually messaged by the school
12 administration and the principal. That's why we ask
13 for that partnership to have that done.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: That's
15 interesting. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Council Member
17 Krishnan?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you so
19 much, Chair Joseph, for hosting this hearing, too.
20 Thank you both for attending as well. Kevin, I
21 think-- I first want to say thank you for all your
22 work with us early on in the year during the pandemic
23 to get resources to our schools. I really appreciate
24 how responsive you all were. You know, I want to echo
25 some of the things that my colleagues have raised.

1
2 This is a really important topic and I know the
3 Department of Education is taking more steps for more
4 healthy, culturally appropriate-- culturally
5 responsive and appropriate food, as well. And you
6 know, just a couple things on those topics. First, I
7 do want to just echo what Council Member De La Rosa
8 had said about really ensuring that our school
9 cafeterias are properly ventilated, that our workers
10 there are able to work in the summer or in the fall
11 in situations where it's not extremely hot. So that
12 remains an ongoing concern of ours. I just want to
13 note that, that we'll be monitoring that. My first
14 question is, you know, knowing the meatless Mondays
15 and the vegan Fridays, as a vegetarian myself-- I'm
16 raising my children vegetarian, too, my wife and I.
17 You know, this is obviously an issue of personal
18 concern I have. while I appreciate the DOE's efforts
19 to incorporate vegetarianism and veganism into the
20 diet, the fact of the matter is that still the food
21 that I've seen that's served is not healthy
22 vegetarian food, and I think what we want to be
23 showing really is-- and that's the truth of it, it
24 is-- you know, just being vegetarian alone doesn't
25 automatically equate to healthy food, right? You

1
2 have to actually make choices and eat food that's not
3 processed, that's not high in cholesterol and fat,
4 even if there's no-- technically not meat on it. And
5 I'm not-- the DOE, I'm not sure has gotten there yet.
6 And so one question I had was from giving the
7 feedback from, you know, vegan Fridays or meatless
8 Monday's, too, are there any food consulting
9 organizations or dietary consultants or other
10 advocacy group that you all are working with to
11 figure out what is the best possible meal plan that
12 both reflects healthy food and vegetarianism?

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: That's a
14 great question and great concern. Thank you for
15 that. We actually worked specifically with wellness
16 in the schools, the Coalition for Healthy Food and a
17 lot of vegetarian/vegan organizations around the City
18 to create the menus. Coalition for Healthy School
19 Food actually works with us religiously, including
20 last week Friday at a school not too far from here,
21 to create additional vegetarian and vegan plant-
22 powered recipes. So we are going down that path. I
23 would love to go visit a school with you--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: [interposing]
25 Okay.

1
2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: to point
3 out some stuff, take a look at some stuff and educate
4 myself from your perspective, and hopefully you can
5 be educated from my perspective and our perspective
6 as a department about what's included in all of our
7 food, low sodium, low fat, etcetera. But I do want
8 to hear and see the concerns, because you have two
9 kids in the school system--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: [interposing]
11 Absolutely.

12 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: that are
13 going to be eating this food. That's what matters the
14 most.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Absolutely, and
16 I would appreciate that, too, because I do know there
17 are efforts, but you know, when I hear my child come
18 home and say he's eating pizza, you know, or other
19 stuff like that it's just while the philosophy and
20 the policies are there on the ground level, may not
21 always be getting there. So, I think it's-- and
22 that's true across the schools. So, let's absolutely
23 plan to do that and look forward to seeing more
24 efforts from DOE in that regard. And my other
25 question is, you know,-- and Council Member Hanif

1
2 alluded to this, too, but you know, we saw that
3 according to the CDC students in the US receive fewer
4 than eight hours of required nutrition education each
5 school year, far below the 40 to 50 hours that are
6 needed. Obviously, as a parent this is something
7 that I work on every day at home. It's also just,
8 you know, ensuring that, you know, my children given
9 all the stigmas and stereotypes about eating
10 vegetables and fruits and things like that. How do
11 we from a young age make sure that children feel
12 good, excited and want to eat, you know, healthy and
13 nutritious food, and of course, that's about
14 education. So, you know, I just-- are there upcoming
15 programs or what are some thoughts that we can do
16 here in the City to really engage students more
17 around nutrition education?

18 KEVIN MORAN: Yeah, very much appreciate.
19 That is quite timely. In the past, we've aligned
20 with our state standards and certainly track that
21 schools were actually having nutrition and health
22 class, and giving the hours of instruction mandated
23 by the state on all level, but have-- this
24 Administration has been very purposeful in looking at
25 this topic very closely. We're developing some

1
2 content now to further enrich, and I think it's more
3 about, you know, just the nutritional value but also
4 the culturally relevant experience to all-- and how
5 we are shaping our menus now, and we're going to do a
6 much deeper dive into how we supplement our current
7 nutrition and health classes. And so some in
8 physical education, but predominance being in our
9 health education classes. So, something we're
10 focused on as an administration now. The
11 Chancellor's very clear about how we develop
12 knowledge here and develop content and language
13 that's universal that people understand, to your
14 point earlier about you know, what is it to be vegan,
15 and there's so much to that, right? And we have to
16 catch up to kind of the larger educational experience
17 within classrooms about the experience in the
18 cafeteria.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Absolutely.
20 And I would just say in that regard, you know, it's--
21 and I look forward to seeing more, and you know, I
22 think it's-- it's all connected, right? Like if we
23 want to have better food served in the system that,
24 you know, children will eat and get them more used to
25 it, too. From a young age these perspectives develop

1 on food that are much, much harder to undo later.
2
3 And so, you know, there's some good programs that
4 I've seen in the schools I visited around, as
5 mentioned before, whether it's farming techniques or,
6 you know, urban gardens and agriculture. And so, you
7 know, I just wonder if there are ways to link those
8 to education nutrition, but I think we're really-- we
9 go to be in the business of changing mindsets, and
10 that's a much deeper work to [inaudible].

11 KEVIN MORAN: And thank you very much.
12 I'd like to connect you to our office of school
13 [inaudible] possible as we think through this
14 together.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Sure.

16 KEVIN MORAN: I think it'd be wonderful to
17 have your feedback.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Absolutely, look
19 forward to it. Thank you, appreciate it.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council
21 Member. My question is to piggy-back off of Council
22 Member Krishnan. We know according to CDC, students
23 in the US receive fewer hours, fewer than eight hours
24 of nutrition education in schools, far below the 40
25 to 50 hours that are needed to effect behavior

1 change. So can you tell us how many schools offer
2 nutrition education programs, activities whether
3 conducted by the school staff alone or in conjunction
4 with organizations? How many CBO providers,
5 organizations, work in the schools to deliver food
6 and nutrition education, and how does the DOE track
7 the number of hours instruction students receive?
8 And have you conducted any evaluation of these
9 programs to find out which are the most effective?
10

11 KEVIN MORAN: So, top line on all health
12 education that's required, we do track that through
13 our systems. The STAR system actually look at
14 programming. For students in kindergarten through
15 five, they certainly have to have the health
16 instruction every year. The middle school students
17 have to have health education every day in every-- in
18 one semester for 54 hours. High school students are
19 the same. We're looking at building off that.
20 Ultimately, we do have state standards, and the City
21 can track that very locally through our systems. So,
22 it's something that we're, you know, I mentioned
23 earlier, trying to expand a bit more of our reach in
24 how much we offer this, both in physical education
25 and health.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Are you able to
3 evaluate and assess the ones that are working and the
4 ones that are not working?

5 KEVIN MORAN: on the curriculum side, I'd
6 have to get back to our Office of Teaching and
7 Learning and see where the most effective programs
8 that we perceive to are and where we're replicating
9 that, but certainly is one of the pillars to
10 replicating what works best. And so that's a great
11 question and something I'll take back to our Division
12 of Learning-- Teaching and Learning and our wellness
13 program.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. One of
15 the programs I used to run when I was still in school
16 was cook shop. Is that something you guys are using
17 or-- and is it something we plan to expand in other
18 schools around the nutrition education programs?

19 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: So, cook
20 shop is not something that we are using agency-wide.
21 It's something that we've had up and sometime
22 certainly we'll follow up on to see where it's being
23 used, how it's being used, but it's not managed
24 directly through our Department, and I'm not aware of
25 schools at-large that are using it with great

1
2 frequency, but something I'll follow-up. It's
3 certainly with the NYC Food Bank that I know works
4 more closely with, so we'll definitely follow up on
5 that item.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah, because it
7 doesn't only include the child's nutrition education,
8 it also involves the parents and teaching them how to
9 cook the food and duplicate the models as well. I'd
10 like to recognize Council Member Sanchez. Thank you
11 for being here. Do you have any questions? Any
12 other person want to have-- Council Member Krishnan,
13 you're good? Council Member Dinowitz, you had
14 another question?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Thank you.
16 Thank you, Chair. I just wanted to know, the-- you
17 mentioned earlier that families are no longer
18 eligible to receive the school food, but they had
19 been during the height of the pandemic, is that
20 correct?

21 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: yes.
22 During the pandemic we were serving the public meals.
23 Anyone that walked up to a door could receive a meal.
24 When we transitioned into-- back to student in-person
25 learning, the program for public meals shifted to the

1
2 City's robust food pantries and other programs that
3 they have.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: so, I think we
5 understand more now than maybe we did five, ten years
6 ago the importance of things like community schools
7 and schools as community centers as places where
8 children and families go for more than just the eight
9 o'clock to 2:50, whatever the school hours are. Are
10 there any efforts centrally to partner with food
11 pantries or trusted organizations that, you know, we
12 fund in the Council that work with Council Members to
13 provide maybe alternative options to the specific
14 school food? Organizations like-- you know, we work
15 with Met Council. We work with Common Pantry and
16 they provide bags of groceries. Is there any effort
17 centrally to work with these organizations to provide
18 that food to the families outside of the school meals
19 program?

20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: At the
21 current time, I'm not familiar with any conversations
22 that are happening, but as a city, as a Department,
23 we would love to participate in those broader
24 conversations for this specific initiative.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Okay. And just
3 one other part. You know, we're looking at
4 composting, right? We're expanding school composting
5 in the budget. This is a huge issue for this Council.
6 It's obviously a huge issue for our environment and a
7 good piece of that is the education piece and what
8 we're doing in the schools. As part of that program
9 are the utensils and the plates and the cups and the
10 trays. Are there efforts being made to ensure that
11 those items as we expand composing in the schools,
12 that those items are compostable as well?

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: I really
14 appreciate you asking that question. For years, all
15 of our trays and cutlery has been compostable. We
16 have not had what you see sometimes, the pictures of
17 the Styrofoam in years. I can get you the exact year
18 if you'd like, but the tray and the cutlery both are
19 compostable. You could in fact eat the tray if you
20 wanted to, but I don't suggest that.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: I should have
22 known by your smile when I was asking the question
23 that you already had an answer to that.

24 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: I had to.
25 I couldn't hold that in, sorry.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: I just want to
3 clarify, the cups as well are compostable?

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: The cups at
5 the moment are not compostable, but we are in talks
6 to try to get that done as well.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Great. Those
8 are my only additional questions. And of course, the
9 other things mentioned earlier that we'll talk
10 offline about my particularly schools and would love
11 to get you to the district. Thank you both so much.
12 Thank you, Chair.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council
14 Member. I had a very question that's very pressing.
15 I'm getting text messages about it. We know that the
16 Mayor had called the elimination of chocolate milk
17 from school menus due to high sugar content. So what
18 is the position of OFNS on this issue? How many
19 students currently choose chocolate milk over plain
20 milk, and how does the DOE-- has the DOE done an
21 analysis of the impact of eliminating chocolate milk
22 from school menus?

23 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Currently,
24 we still serve chocolate milk at schools. We are
25 committed to having healthy options in schools for

1
2 students and we'll continue to engage all stakeholder
3 in this conversation.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, I hope they
5 heard that, because I've been getting a lot of
6 messaging about the chocolate milk, because even the
7 adults drink it. We had another question, I'm not
8 sure. I think Council Member Stevens asked for it,
9 students who are lactose intolerant, do we have
10 options for them?

11 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Currently,
12 water is available and must be available in every
13 single cafeteria, so that is an option. Students
14 that have a medical situation, a 504 or a
15 prescription from a doctor can receive alternatives
16 to milk. We are in talks around what the
17 alternatives are to expand even further, but we're
18 still in talks at this point.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, because yeah,
20 that was one of the questions, if there was option
21 for soy milk, or option for oat milk, or options for
22 almond milk.

23 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: We have
24 non-dairy milk available for children with a 504
25 accommodation or a health medication [inaudible]

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And it's on-site and
3 the staff knows to request it if it's available or
4 that's something that's being communicated?

5 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: It's on-
6 site every single school, and the nur-- every single
7 nurse in the school has an option for this as well,
8 and we rely heavily on the managers within the
9 school, the cooks in the schools, and the principals
10 that know the children, and communicate this
11 information to parents.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, very
13 important. Thank you. Council Member Sanchez,
14 please?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you so
16 much, Madam Chair. Apologies if you've covered this
17 since I was in and out listening to the hearing, but
18 just in comparison to the height of the pandemic, the
19 food programs that the DOE was running in
20 communities, you know, at a school, the Get Food NYC
21 program, how is that changing as we go into Fiscal
22 Year 23?

23 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: SO, we are
24 really proud of the work that we did during the
25 pandemic, but we are really excited to return this

1
2 fall to all pre-pandemic regulations and the use of
3 the cafeteria. We will be back to normal service,
4 which is really exciting. We've learned lessons
5 during the pandemic, but I think it's really exciting
6 that we will once again see all cafeteria service
7 lines being used serving the best food we possibly
8 can and serving the healthy, nutritious and delicious
9 meals that we have.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Okay, so the
11 emergency provision to community members outside of
12 the school system is going to end?

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: When we
14 returned to in-person learning in September 2021, we
15 transitioned that work to the City's food pantries
16 and other food distribution sits. That information
17 is on our website as well as the DSS website.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I have a question
20 for you around food waste. How do you-- how much food
21 waste is the federal rule creates, and how do you
22 collect data on food waste volume from the program?

23 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: It's a
24 very good question. My staff, they're all trained to
25 do what's called batch cooking. We cook based on the

1
2 number of meals we serve. We cook based on the
3 attendance at the school, and we monitor this every
4 single day. It is a priority for our staff to make
5 sure they are doing this correctly. This is also
6 recorded in all of our production records and all of
7 our books, which we are audited on. It also allows
8 us to cost-out every single meal, including labor.
9 Once a child takes the food away from the service
10 line and discards that, currently we do not track
11 that due to the fact that we would need more staff to
12 be able to do that. It's actually something that we
13 are looking into as we move forward with all of the
14 things that we want to do and some of the visions
15 that we do have for our city, but currently we do
16 not track food waste once it's taken away from the
17 cafeteria service line.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you both for
19 your testimony today. Thank you so much. We'll be in
20 touch and we'll have follow-up questions.

21 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRICARICO: Yeah, and
22 we would love to partner, go to schools, take people
23 on tours. It's something that we really prioritize
24 and want everyone to be able to see the good work
25 that's being done. I'd just like once again just to

1
2 thank the School Food Service workers for the great
3 job that they did, and also really thank the City and
4 the City Council for its partnership.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Absolutely. Thank
6 you and look forward to our partnership. The next
7 we'll have an in-person panel: Donald Nesbit, and
8 from local-- Vice President from Local 372 and DC 37,
9 and Julia McCarthy [sp?] from New York Health
10 Foundation. Thank you so much. Good morning. Mr.
11 Nesbit, welcome. Turn on your mic. Thank you.

12 DONALD NESBIT: See, I'm so excited to be
13 back in-person.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Oh, okay, that's
15 exciting.

16 DONALD NESBIT: Good morning,
17 distinguished members of the Council and Education
18 Committee Chair, Rita Joseph. I'm Donald Nesbit,
19 Vice President for DC 37, Local 372. We represent
20 the members who work in school cafeterias, and prior
21 to being elected, I'm proud to say that my title is a
22 school lunch helper/cook. So I come from-- out of the
23 school food-- school food area of the school
24 building. I'm here representing 24,000 members of my
25 Local, 9,000 who work in the school food section of

1 the school under the leadership of President Shaun D.
2 Francois, the first. On a normal day, children need
3 food in order to concentrate and learn in the
4 classroom. Local 372 is extremely supportive of the
5 breakfast program as well as the universal lunch
6 program. Every child that comes into a school
7 building should be fed and nourished. However, this
8 is demanding work. While current practices meet the
9 Department of Education the Office of school Food
10 Standards, the current guidelines stretch School Food
11 employee's thing. Between the breakfast in classroom
12 program and preparing for lunch in a short period of
13 time, on top of their core responsibilities, these
14 workers serve tens of millions of meals during the
15 pandemic to families, to the community as outlined
16 here today, and so they need more than a cla-- they
17 need true recognition. Furthermore, well-intentioned
18 law makers introduced legislation, for example Intro
19 199, that would require letter grades for sanitary
20 inspection. This bill doesn't include that the
21 Department of Health report would document areas of
22 the school building that are not necessarily kitchen
23 areas and would lead to further disciplinary or ways
24 to disciplinary action against the workers. The
25

1 strain in the workforce must be alleviated. Hiring
2 more school food-- more Local 372 School Food staff.
3 Respectfully, we request 1,000 additional workers to
4 alleviate the burden on the workers who are already
5 over worked due to workers leaving, due to the
6 mandates or whatever has happened during the
7 pandemic. More workers have retired than usual.
8 Another struggle faced by School Food employees which
9 has a direct impact to sanitation and hygiene. It is
10 a need for our cafeterias and kitchens to have
11 ventilation, proper ventilation, AC's, I mean cooling
12 areas. Most buildings that are built between 1930
13 and 1990 lack that proper design. In these kitchens
14 many-- thank you, Chair-- many of these Local 372
15 kitchen employees every day have little to no cooling
16 or ventilation and temperatures can reach over 130
17 degrees in some cafeterias. Working under these hot
18 conditions-- high temperatures are dangerous. It can
19 lead to workers passing out, experiencing heat
20 stroke. Heat stroke is the most serious illness
21 associated with work in hot environments. Workers
22 can suffer heat strokes, become delirious, confused,
23 convulsive, and comatose in some cases, and even
24 fatal. We must do something to correct this and be
25

1
2 proactive not reactive to the situation. City
3 Comptroller issued a report on this and in previous
4 City Council hearings, Council Member Treyger even
5 pushed-- he's here-- even pushed for the need for us
6 to do something immediately, because as a teacher e
7 saw the effects of kitchen worker who experienced
8 over-heated kitchens various time. So, resolution--
9 it moved him to introduce Resolution 145-2019,
10 calling on the Department of Education to install air
11 conditions and cooling systems in New York City
12 public kitchens. In addition to ventilation, Local
13 372 supports the redesign of cafeterias which focuses
14 on increased numbers and student participation. But
15 finding healthy food options has been a push by the
16 Mayor and a priority. We're in support, but we will
17 reiterate that you need-- educational components are
18 to go with this. While implementing this policy is a
19 good step, or providing educational healthy eating
20 habit should be a focus to help our children be
21 mindful of healthy eating habits and healthier
22 choices. Children will be more inclined to eat
23 healthier options if they knew what foods are
24 beneficial to them, especially younger children. For
25 example, if you tell a child that eating carrots is

1
2 good for their vision and for their eyes, they'll be
3 more inclined and likely to eat carrot compared to
4 children who are unaware of its benefits. So, in
5 conclusion, School Food workers are critical to a
6 functioning school system. These workers come in
7 every day, go above and beyond, sometimes come in
8 before their time, leave later without being
9 compensated. The City's children are their life's
10 work, and in order for this program to succeed, we
11 need adequate staffing, safe working environment, and
12 nutrition education. And lastly, I'll end with this.
13 This is something that should be all of our
14 priorities, because children in our society are 20-25
15 percent of our population, but they are 100 percent
16 of our future. Thank you, Chair.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much.
18 Yes, you're right. They deserve more than a clap.
19 They were the heroes during the pandemic. I was still
20 teaching prior to getting into the Council, so I saw
21 firsthand what they did. Incredible, and I think we
22 owe them more than that. So, what is that-- we were--
23 - I think one of my colleagues that living wages be
24 one of the things that the employees are offered, and
25 safe working conditions. One of the things I know

1
2 Kevin talked about is installed AC's, so the workers
3 can cook in nutrition education. Well, we thank you
4 for your service. What is that-- you talked about
5 the Intro 191. What is the problem with that intro?

6 DONALD NESBIT: So, that bill doesn't
7 take into account that when the Department of Health
8 actually comes into a school, the Department of
9 Health does an extensive report, but it's not only
10 the kitchen that they do a report on. They also go
11 into areas like the custodian cleaning areas, like
12 the slop sink, which is not inside of the physical
13 kitchen, but it physically goes into a report. That
14 report is then issued to a supervisory or managerial
15 staff at School Food, and if there's a grade system,
16 it will only reflect on the staff of the kitchen, and
17 it will also lead to-- add another way of
18 disciplinary action against workers. Like we said,
19 they were heroes and sheroes [sic] for us. Adding
20 another layer of discipline and some of the report
21 doesn't even reflect the areas. I think it's just
22 unfair.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you for that.
24 I needed to know that. What is the starting salary
25 for someone who works at OFNS?

1
2 DONALD NESBIT: So, School Food
3 employees, when they come into a job, it's 14-
4 something an hour for senior school lunch helper and
5 a school lunch helper. That increases over a two-
6 year period and then they go to the incumbent [sic]
7 rate, and as Kevin indicated earlier, it's on an
8 average of about 17 dollars an hour.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, you're saying
10 that that's not living wages for your members?

11 DONALD NESBIT: No. There's certainly a
12 need to increase. If you look at, you do a
13 comparison of School Food employees and hotels and
14 other places, and they're certainly making salaries
15 beyond our salaries. You look at some of the-- our
16 kitchen-- kitchen employees do work on a level of
17 sous chefs and chefs, and we know the type of money
18 that they're making and this is their life work.
19 This was my life work. Being a cook, I took into
20 consideration that if I wouldn't eat it like this, I
21 wasn't going to cook it for my students. Even in my
22 visits going back to the school now, most-- I've been
23 an officer for seven years on the union side, but I
24 go back to the school, and just coming from that
25 community where I worked at, so many students who

1
2 older brother and sisters went to the school have
3 heard about my food and say, "Hey, when you're coming
4 back?" Right? They cook for us now, I mean, our
5 generation. And so many stories of this nature and
6 the impact that we had within the schools, again, it
7 should be more than a-- we really need to start
8 looking at the work that they're actually doing and
9 do a comparison of what a chef is doing and how much
10 they are actually getting paid. We've also been
11 making a push with the leadership in the Office of
12 School Nutrition to actually consider our cooks for
13 those chef positions. When the City is looking at
14 chef positions to train, the cooks, we should get
15 first priority as we are the ones that are actually
16 doing those jobs on a daily basis.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I hope Chris is
18 taking notes. Is that one of the reasons it's been
19 hard to staff schools?

20 DONALD NESBIT: It has been one of the
21 reasons. Some individuals who have gone through the
22 hiring halls-- and I do have to give credit where
23 it's due. Chris and I, we had a discussion on the
24 need to hire more and release-- create some relief
25 for the workers that re current there. And so this

1
2 push has been both from the union and from management
3 side to create hiring halls, create spaces where we
4 will get more people the job, but what we're finding
5 is, people get the job, a few of them have said, "I
6 can't live on this." And within the first couple of
7 days, they may leave the job, right, to go somewhere
8 else. Even if the job doesn't include the health
9 benefits and things that you get attached to a city
10 job. People are just leaving because the money, they
11 need to be able to survive.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Got it. Understood.
13 Thank you for that. Next, Julia? How are you?
14 Thank you.

15 JULIA MCCARTHY: Chairperson Joseph and
16 distinguished members of the Committee on Education.
17 My name is Julia McCarthy and I'm a Senior Program
18 Officer with the New York Health Foundation. I'm
19 very grateful for the opportunity to testify today. I
20 want to take a quick moment to answer three questions
21 that were raised earlier. First, Council Member
22 Dinowitz, we will be releasing survey data that
23 polled families with children later this summer and
24 fall on their perspectives around school food, and I
25 look forward to sharing that with the Council.

1
2 Second, on questions that Brewer, Louis, and--
3 Council Members Brewer, Louis and-- Council Members
4 Brewer, Louis, and Lee raised. We are also
5 supporting the Mayor's Office of Food Policy to
6 implement the Good Food Purchasing Program. That was
7 required through Executive Order eight, and that will
8 open up hopefully contracts to more diverse, local
9 vendors. And then third, directed to Council Members
10 Joseph and Krishnan, thank you for funding the Food
11 Ed Hub [inaudible] the Tish [sic] Food Center. They
12 actually aggregate sort of all information on
13 nutrition education and are tracking that and working
14 with the 80-plus groups across the City who provide
15 that. So, I'd say they're a great resource to answer
16 any further questions. Now turning towards my
17 testimony. Supporting healthier, culturally
18 responsive food is a core strategy of the foundation,
19 particularly in schools. In 2017, we supported
20 community Food Advocates to secure universal free
21 school meals for New York City's 1.1 million public
22 school children, and we are also now supporting an
23 advocacy campaign at the state level that would
24 expand free school meals for all students, building
25 on New York City's successes. Both the Office of

1
2 Food Nutrition Service and the New York City Council
3 can take actions to prevent childhood hunger going
4 forward. So, looking first at the actions that the
5 Office of Food and Nutrition Service can take. We
6 applaud their continued focus on the role that school
7 meals play in maintaining students' health, and I
8 want to say as a backdrop, New York City School Food
9 is like New York as a whole. You know, we are sort
10 of setting the pace for the rest of the country and
11 we are still always recognizing that we need to
12 strive for more and can do better. You know, despite
13 OFNS' heroic daily efforts, there are looming federal
14 policy changes that will create barriers to flexible
15 school meal access, and we recommend that the Office
16 of Food Nutrition Service in collaborating with the
17 Mayor's Office of Food Policy develop a plan for
18 future school closures that's informed by the COVID-
19 19 pandemic. Focus groups conducted by the Tish Food
20 Center provide insight to how OFNS can continue to
21 improve, and I want to be clear again, these are
22 actions that OFNS has been taking and been working
23 with partners to continually improve on, but should
24 be considered seriously in this plan. That is first
25 to continue to offer flexible pick-up times and

1
2 expand the number and location of those pick-up sites
3 and make sure that they're in welcoming locations.

4 DOE can also strengthen communication about food
5 availability, providing information in multiple
6 languages and communicating changes in real time.

7 They can increase the variety of meals offered,
8 including hot meals and those that are culturally
9 relevant. And finally, ensure consistent

10 implementation across sites, especially in less

11 wealthy neighborhoods. Turning quickly to what the

12 City Council can do. First, I would say continue to
13 provide additional funding. I agree with what my

14 colleague here said that local funding could both

15 help mitigate the impact of higher food prices and

16 really help often as hire additional School Food

17 staff. Chris said that they're nearly back to pre-

18 pandemic levels, but those levels, but those levels

19 were too low. We know that additional School Food

20 staff and school food managers would help them to

21 better serve school communities. Next, we want to

22 advocate for school. We want the City Council to

23 advocate for school meal waivers to be made permanent

24 at the federal level. So federal-- these federal

25 waivers made meal provision during the pandemic

1
2 easier, and research from the Tish Food Center again
3 suggests that these measures, if made permanent,
4 would increase participation. And finally, we want
5 to support efforts like the push for universal school
6 meals at the state level. So we know, you know, that
7 these federal waivers may not come through past June
8 30th, and the state still has an opportunity to act
9 and one that would provide economics of scale across
10 the state, including to New York City. And New York
11 City Council members can voice their support for free
12 school meals for all statewide should the Federal
13 Government choose not to act. New York Health
14 Foundation is grateful for the shared recognition and
15 the important roll school meals play in promoting
16 food, security and dietary health, and we look
17 forward to continuing to partner with the City.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much
19 both for your testimonies. I'd like to recognize
20 Council Member Feliz. Do you have any questions,
21 Council Member? Okay, thank you. Thank you both
22 for your testimony. Anyone else in the room need to
23 testify? We're going to now move to our Zoom
24 testimonies. Heidi, would Heidi Zacharia [sp?]?
25

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

1
2 : Thank you for the opportunity to
3 testify at today's hearing. My name is [inaudible]
4 and I'm currently a seventh grader at--

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] Yes,
6 this is a group of students that are testifying on
7 school food today. Thank you, Ms. Zacharia [sp?].

8 UNIDENTIFIED: [inaudible] It is
9 important for the New York City Council hears about
10 our issue [sic] [inaudible] it's a serious issue that
11 needs to be addressed and [inaudible] There are
12 actually [inaudible]

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] We
14 cannot hear you.

15 UNIDENTIFIED: After much debate, we
16 decided [inaudible] to our cafeteria. I'm testifying
17 today on [inaudible]

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] Can you
19 turn up your-- turn up your microphone and speak up a
20 little louder?

21 UNIDENTIFIED: I am a Muslim student who
22 cannot eat current lunch food at my school, and I
23 want to vouch for the other students that share the
24 same situation. Our class chose this issue because
25 we [inaudible] that a lot of food [inaudible]

1
2 ultimately food and [inaudible] aren't as nutritious
3 as they make it. [inaudible] not only is this
4 unhealthy, but the [inaudible]. It's important that
5 we accommodate those who [inaudible] of our
6 community. Although [inaudible] everybody [inaudible]
7 people within the community. [inaudible] examples of
8 food are noodles, ravioli, waffle, and [inaudible]
9 really can't fully apply this request I think it's
10 important to make food more interesting options
11 [inaudible].

12 UNIDENTIFIED: To complete this goal, we
13 made a letter and sent it to the principal and
14 dietician. In this letter we talk about how at least
15 20 percent of the school population is Muslim
16 [inaudible] and that's at least [inaudible]. And it
17 would be very helpful because the school days are
18 seven to 10 [sic] hours long, and it would make them
19 more [inaudible]. This food also goes to waste,
20 because most students don't want to eat that food.
21 At this point, 40 percent of the school food gets
22 thrown out in our school, and less food would get
23 thrown out if we [inaudible]. So even though it makes
24 [inaudible] less food go to waste. And I think that
25 [inaudible] 372 [sic] dollars' worth of food for each

1 person is wasted every year, and 387 billion [sic]
2 [inaudible]. And less would go to waste if we
3 [inaudible]. And after that, that letter that we
4 sent to the dietician and principal, we made a survey
5 to the school, and with this survey we talk about how
6 many students [inaudible] would they like [inaudible]
7 implemented into the school lunch and how many would
8 like normal lunch. Ten percent of NYC is Muslim,
9 which is about 800,000 students and a lot of the
10 schools and the other schools are allowed to eat
11 [inaudible]. So I think it would be important if we
12 also [inaudible]. Thank you for the opportunity to
13 submit this testimony about an issue that's important
14 to me and my classmates. My name is [inaudible].

16 UNIDENTIFIED: I'm sorry, can you speak
17 up and put the mic-- turn it up.

18 : Our most-- our [inaudible] is trying
19 to [inaudible] school food [inaudible] because me and
20 some of my classmates [inaudible] that they had no
21 other options, and I think that [inaudible] a lot of
22 people [inaudible]. Another thing is that quality of
23 the food is really bad. We did more research from
24 other peers [sic] [inaudible] They have brown
25 broccoli [inaudible]

1
2 UNIDENTIFIED: We need the students to
3 speak up and maybe because there's two accounts, two
4 online, it would help if it turned one of them off.
5 Thank you.

6 : Having halal food [inaudible] amount
7 of people that are eating our school lunch, and it
8 also-- it also has [inaudible]

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: We can't hear you.
10 Is it possible that you cannot use the headphones?
11 We can't hear you.

12 : [inaudible]

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I don't think so.
14 Hello?

15 : [inaudible]

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: They cannot--

17 UNIDENTIFIED: [inaudible] now that
18 there's been a national pandemic, there's also
19 [inaudible]. Another reason why halal [inaudible]
20 The animal that is slaughtered [inaudible]

21 ROSA: Hi, I'm Rosa [sic] [inaudible] and
22 I will discuss issues that [inaudible] students have
23 to go without lunch. Not only is it unhealthy but
24 [inaudible] ravioli [inaudible]

1
2 UNIDENTIFIED: [inaudible] any more
3 speakers from [inaudible]

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, we will move
5 on to the next panel.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: The next panel will
7 be Rachel Sabella from No Kid Hungry, Amy Hamlin,
8 Coalition for Healthy School Food, Kelly Wind,
9 Coalition for Healthy School Food, Ally Miller,
10 Edible School Yards, and Liz Accles, Community Food
11 Advocates. Start with Rachel Sabella.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your three minutes
13 start now.

14 RACHEL SABELLA: Before we move to public
15 testimony, testing my audio.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Audio sounds good.

17 RACHEL SABELLA: Can I go?

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yes.

19 RACHEL SABELLA: Okay, great. Thank you.
20 Good afternoon. My name is Rachel Sabella. I'm the
21 Director of No Kid Hungry New York with Share Our
22 Strength. I want to start my testimony with saying
23 I've been advocating on food insecurity on school
24 meal programs for the last eight years, and I have
25 never been a part of a hearing quite like this

1 before. I want to thank Chair Joseph for leading and
2 making this hearing happen. I've been cheering and
3 tweeting along, and we especially appreciate your
4 remarks tied to breakfast in the classroom and the
5 federal nutrition waivers. I also want to express my
6 deep appreciation to Speaker Adams for highlighting
7 school meal programs, the waiver programs as part of
8 her State of the City. The Council is a leading and
9 longtime voice for these programs and we're grateful
10 for the work that you've done and will continue to do
11 to connect more kid and families with meals. I'm
12 going to send my testimony written to everyone, but I
13 really want to highlight two key things right now and
14 themes that we heard throughout the pandemic. Food
15 insecurity: one in four kids in New York City could
16 face hunger since the start of the pandemic. We saw
17 progress reversed, but we saw the DOE jump in action,
18 the entire team at the Office of Food and Nutrition
19 Services, and especially the men and women of Local
20 372 DC 37 that have been on the frontline since day
21 one. Whether giving out community meals, making sure
22 breakfast in the classrooms-- and we hear you, Chair
23 Joseph, and we support you on this-- was implemented
24 in every single school building, even ones that said
25

1
2 they couldn't do it for the previous years. We want
3 to see that progress made permanent, and we want to
4 make sure that the Department of Education is making
5 sure every school fully implements grab and go
6 breakfast, delivery to the classroom, making sure
7 kids have that regular and equal access to meals. The
8 other point I want to make that's really important
9 today and is the most time-sensitive is we heard in
10 Chair Joseph's questions about the expiration of the
11 Child Nutrition Waivers. We still have a chance to
12 get these waivers extended, but only if everyone in
13 New York City takes actions now. From Mayor Adams to
14 Chancellor Banks, to Speaker Adams and the entire
15 City Council, we need you to raise your voices to
16 Senator Schumer, to Senator Gillibrand, to members of
17 the congressional delegation, several of whom used to
18 serve on this body, and make sure they know that
19 these waiver extensions are going to be extremely
20 important to feed more kids in New York City.
21 Parents can no longer pick up meals for their
22 children. Kids have to eat on-site with somebody
23 watching to follow those federal rules. And we heard
24 Chris say that they're looking at a 15 percent
25 reduction in federal reimbursements because of this

1
2 expiration of waivers. We can fix this, but we need
3 Congress to take action now. So we look forward to
4 working with this council. I look forward to meeting
5 with everybody, passing on our testimony and being
6 supports to you and the Department of Education as we
7 continue to support the one in for children in New
8 York City that face hunger. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next up is Amie
11 Hamlin followed by Kelly Wind.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

13 KELLY WIND: Hi, this is Kelly Wind. I
14 am testifying for Amie Hamlin, and both of us work
15 for the Coalition for Healthy School Food. We are a
16 nonprofit that introduced plant-based foods and
17 nutrition education in schools to educate the whole
18 school community about the health, environmental, and
19 social justice issues of our food choices. We have
20 worked in partnership with the New York City Office
21 of Food and Nutrition Services since 2005. We are
22 the nonprofit organization that helped to implement
23 plant powered Fridays. We're also working with OFNS
24 to develop additional plant-based recipes. We work
25 with Title I schools since 2005 providing a variety

1
2 of resources and services including our Food on Earth
3 curriculum, guest speakers, family dinner nights,
4 teacher professional development, cooking classes,
5 visiting vegan chefs program for culinary high
6 schools, and virtual programming. We're grateful
7 that OFNS kept communities fed during the pandemic.
8 We are impressed with the partnership meetings which
9 provide transparency about what they are doing, as
10 well as an opportunity for all of the partners to
11 learn about each other's work. Of great interest to
12 us at the Coalition is the increased attention to
13 plant-based main dishes. A major cause of death and
14 disability in the US is the food we eat. High blood
15 pressure and high cholesterol are reversible in a
16 matter of weeks. Heart disease and Type II Diabetes
17 is reversible in a matter of months as Mayor Adams
18 did. Raising animals for food is one of the top
19 causes of climate change, and reducing or eliminating
20 meat and dairy is the biggest thing that an
21 individual can do to address climate change. But we
22 also want to point out that research from the British
23 medical Journal shows that vegans have a 73 percent
24 lower risk of developing moderate to severe
25 complications of COVID-19. So anything we can do to

1
2 move toward a more plant-based diet helps strengthen
3 our immune system. The Coalition is here to continue
4 to provide services to schools and work in
5 partnership with OFNS. We request a focus on three
6 budget priorities. One, provide funding to nonprofits
7 to provide research-based nutrition education in
8 schools. Most schools do not have the budgets to pay
9 for our services, and yet, our comprehensive
10 education for students, their families, teachers, and
11 other school staff creates real change in each school
12 community. Promoting the food available in school
13 cafeterias, as well as the nutrition, environmental,
14 and equity issues related to food choices. With
15 funds from City Council, we could teach more and fund
16 raise less. Two, provide funds to enable schools to
17 provide non-dairy milks upon request. Most students
18 of the global majority cannot digest cow's milk.
19 This is a serious equity issue. Lactose intolerance
20 is actually a normal condition. Mammals are not meant
21 to drink milk after weaning, nor are they meant to
22 drink the milk of another species. What this means
23 is that students of color may end up with a belly
24 ache or worse--

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time.

1
2 KELLY WIND: as a result of drinking
3 cow's milk.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

5 KELLY WIND: Three, support OFNS by
6 providing funding for 60 additional mangers so that
7 they can achieve optimal staffing levels, helping
8 ensure that children are well-fed and ready to learn.
9 While not a budget item, we also want to mention that
10 the procurement process for new foods is very
11 cumbersome. New suppliers can register, but BIDs are
12 not frequent and innovation is slow due to the
13 process. This means that it can take two to three
14 years to get a new food on the menu. While we
15 understand the need for competitive bidding, this
16 really impacts the ability of OFNS to add healthy new
17 items to the menus. We are grateful to the City
18 Council for its commitment to supporting healthy food
19 in schools. Thank you.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next up is Ally
21 Miller followed by Liz Accles.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: the time starts now.

23 ALLY MILLER: Hi everyone. My name is
24 Ally Miller from Edible Schoolyard NYC. I'm going to
25 start just by saying thank you to Chair Rita Joseph

1
2 and all the distinguished members of the Education
3 Committee for holding this hearing and giving us this
4 opportunity to submit testimony. Edible Schoolyard
5 NYC partners with New York City public schools to
6 cultivate healthy students' school environments
7 through hands-on cooking and gardening education, as
8 well as supporting school cafeterias and healthy
9 school food. We're currently working with 10
10 schools, serving 3,500 students in Brooklyn,
11 Manhattan, and the Bronx where we are maintaining
12 caring for school gardens knowing that teachers and
13 school staff often do not have time or pay to
14 maintain school garden. We're leading student,
15 family, and community programs, and we're providing
16 healthy plant-forward food distributions. We know
17 that schools are critical spaces for students to both
18 receive and learn about food, and for many New York
19 City students, the bulk of their food and nutrition
20 is coming from schools. We believe that school food
21 needs to be nutritious, locally-grown, culturally
22 appropriate, and student-driven, and we believe
23 deeply that school food is most successful when
24 paired with food education. Because of this, we have
25 several recommendations, including more in our

1 written testimony. One, providing sustained flexible
2 funding for schools, knowing, again, that school
3 staff are often overworked, underpaid, and often
4 schools lack resources to bring in community-based
5 organization partners to care for school gardens, to
6 provide food education, to provide cafeteria-based
7 education, and to support with cafeteria composting.
8 We also support expansion of cafeteria-based
9 nutrition education such as OFNS' Garden to Café
10 program which is very limited right now. Our staff
11 right now are actually at this moment at PS109 in
12 Council District 14 in the Bronx, working with the
13 Garden to Café program to serve spinach, carrot salad
14 with a honey thyme shallot dressing, and local New
15 York State apples to students in the cafeteria. It's
16 been reported that the students are really loving it,
17 and we know that students who get to taste what is on
18 the menu beforehand and get to see how it relates to
19 their school environment, their school garden. They
20 will enjoy that food more. We also support providing
21 opportunities for more student-driven school food
22 menu items, giving students voice in what is on their
23 menu, especially making sure that that food is
24 culturally relevant will support more students to
25

1 eat, choose, and enjoy that food. We also support
2 asks to increase the capacity of OFNS. There's more
3 school food managers and better retention of school
4 food workers, as well as planning for increased
5 accessibility and community feedback in planning for
6 summer and emergency school food. Thank you so much
7 to the committee for all of your time and your
8 effort.
9

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: thank you. Next up
11 is Liz Accles followed by Debby Lee Cohen, Roma Yang,
12 and then Philip Chong. Liz?

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

14 LIZ ACCLES: Thank you. Thank you, Chair
15 Joseph and members of the committee. I'm so happy to
16 be here today. It is refreshing to have a mayor and
17 City Council that are focused holistically on
18 students' school meal experience. So this has been a
19 long time coming, and it's really just fantastic. I
20 want to acknowledge all the work that the leadership
21 in OFNS and everyone throughout the process have been
22 doing for years, but really bringing innovation to
23 children's experience in the last while. I am here
24 on behalf of Community Food Advocates and the Lunch
25 for Learning Coalition, and we are the coalition that

1
2 fought to get universal free school meals for all New
3 York City public school students, and have recently
4 in the last few years turned our efforts to making
5 sure the Department of Education's cafeteria
6 enhancement experience, which I call cafeteria re-
7 design, is scaled to all high schools and middle
8 schools. I'm so happy to hear so many people talking,
9 both Council Members and other folks testifying.
10 We're here for two reasons. One is-- first of all,
11 to celebrate the 50 million dollars that was included
12 in the City budget to expand cafeteria enhancement
13 experience to another 100 schools, which will serve
14 many, many thousands of children. Once those
15 schools-- all the funds that we currently have and
16 those new funds are rolled out, we'll have about a
17 third of the high schools and middle schools covered
18 under cafeteria enhancement, and as you know, anyone
19 who knows us knows that we-- we're focused and
20 persistent and we keep our eyes on the prize, and our
21 ultimate goal is to ensure that all students, all
22 high school and middle school students have an
23 enhanced cafeteria. So we'll be working, looking to
24 you and looking to the Administration to work
25 together to ensure that as we move forward we will

1
2 make sure that that is something that's applied
3 equitably across all schools. I just want to take one
4 more minute to say there's a lot that we learned from
5 the pandemic and echoing both Chris Tricarico and
6 Rachel, breakfast in the classroom and breakfast
7 after the bell by necessity was scaled across the
8 whole school system. we know that breakfast in the
9 classroom and for all students grab and go meals in
10 schools are essential and totally complementary to
11 the enhanced cafeterias, doing everything to make
12 sure we're getting meals to kids in ways that are
13 enjoyable, accessible, and also in terms of that, we
14 need to make sure there's proper staffing to make
15 sure all those things can be carried out

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

17 LIZ ACCLES: I wanted to thank you for
18 your time.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Liz. Next
20 up is Debby Lee Cohen followed by Roma Yang and
21 Philip Chong [sp?]. Debby?

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

23 DEBBY LEE COHEN: Thank you Chair Joseph
24 and committee members and also big thank you to all
25 the Council Members previously who asked excellent

1
2 questions. I'm Debby Lee Cohen. I'm the Executive
3 Director and Founder of Cafeteria Culture, the
4 Environmental Education Organization. I'm also Co-
5 Director/Producer of the award-winning, The Micro-
6 plastic Madness that starts Brooklyn's PS15 fifth
7 grade students. I'm a parent and educator and a
8 Stage IV cancer patient who is deeply concerned about
9 environmental and health impacts of our school
10 cafeteria garbage, especially plastics. Cafeteria
11 Culture was founded as Styrofoam Out of Schools. We
12 work with youth to creatively achieve zero waste,
13 climate-smart, school communities in a plastic-free
14 biosphere. We teach innovative environmental
15 education, foster youth-led solutions with citizen
16 science, civic action, film production, and the arts.
17 And we partner with school food directors and
18 students and through that partnership we catalyze the
19 elimination of Styrofoam trays from all New York City
20 schools and now 18 school districts across the
21 country. We're ready now to catalyze the elimination
22 of the remaining single-use plastics from New York
23 City school cafeterias, revive, refill, and reuse
24 models, and pilot new methods to dramatically reduce
25 wasted food. I just want to say that I'm testifying

1 today in part to highlight the positive incomes-- I'm
2 sorry, positive outcomes of our 13-year partnership
3 with OFNS including our most recent collaboration on
4 the first citywide plastic-free lunch day. I want to
5 urge the Council to increase financial support for
6 small nonprofits and community-based organizations
7 like Cafeteria Culture that are leading low-cost,
8 cutting-edge pilots that accelerate urgently needed
9 institutional change and benefit our students at the
10 same time. Thank you for the funding for New York
11 City Council funding over the years already for our
12 organization Cafeteria Culture. On May 16th, 2022,
13 Cafeteria Culture in partnership with OFNS, Office of
14 sustainability, students, school staff led the first
15 New York City Plastic-Free Lunch Day. Over 750 New
16 York City elementary schools had school lunch
17 prepared without plastic on this day, providing a
18 glimpse of what a plastic-free school cafeteria
19 future can look like and that it's possible. All
20 schools were encouraged to join in the action, and I
21 encourage you to watch our short video. If you go to
22 plasticfreelunch.org, you can see our video right
23 there that we made in partnership with OFNS and
24 Sustainability. And I do want to also give a shout
25

1
2 out to Chris and to Steven O'Brien [sp?] and all the
3 directors of OFNS who supported this initiative. It
4 was a bit of a lift during this time, and we waited
5 for two years for it to happen. This was a student-
6 suggested initiative at PS15 where the initiative
7 first started and the students who first led this in
8 2018. We did a waste audit again with students
9 there, and the number of plastic items from school
10 lunch on--

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time
12 expired.

13 DEBBY LEE COHEN: We reduced 72 percent
14 of the plastic items, or two pieces of plastic for
15 meal-- per meal. So imagine that over an entire
16 school year with a 100 meals served-- a million meals
17 served per day. We have a great opportunity to put a
18 big dent in our procurement of plastics while we save
19 money. And to quote Scarlet, a fifth grade student
20 at our partner school PS188, the Island School in
21 lower Manhattan, "Maybe we could make plastic-free
22 lunch one day, then make it a week, then make it
23 months, and then years, and then make plastic-free
24 lunch day every day." I just want to highlight here
25 that these school pilots are benefiting students on

1 multiple levels, that this kind of collaboration and
2 in-classroom education and opportunities for students
3 to actually take action can be a really incredible
4 antidote for climate anxiety for our students. And
5 the negative and health consequences of our city's
6 plastic procurement cannot be understated. Reducing
7 the production, use and disposable-- disposal of
8 plastic--
9 plastic--

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time
11 expired.

12 DEBBY LEE COHEN: advances our climate,
13 or city's climate goals. Thank you. I'll be
14 testifying at the Sanitation hearing as well. Right
15 now I'm going to that hearing, and I thank you again
16 for this great hearing and this opportunity to speak.
17 Thank you, Chair.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Debby.
19 And next up is Roma Yang, followed by Philip Chong.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

21 ROMA YANG: Good afternoon to all
22 panelists and Council Members. My name is Roma Yang
23 and I'm here on behalf of Union Square Academy for
24 Health Sciences, but I'm also here as a student
25 myself to speak on the food we consume every day in

1 school. Most of New York City schools meals are
2 usually provided at no cost because of the amount of
3 low income families residing in all five boroughs. I
4 personally remember paying for lunch only once ever
5 in my life and that was back in elementary school.
6 The only honest opinion or review you really get is
7 from a student who has consumed these school meals on
8 a daily basis. Many students rely on school meals
9 being their important meals of the day, which is why
10 making sure school meals should be filling and as
11 nutritious as possible. When I was asked what changes
12 we'd like to see in the NYC schools in the future, I
13 mentioned school lunches. There are a large number
14 of students in many schools and it's understandable
15 that it's hard to prepare hot lunches for a massive
16 group of students. However, so far the school lunches
17 I've had over the years have not been as filling and
18 as they should be nor are they super nutritious.
19 Recently, they've also gotten rid of the salad
20 options which I found very unnecessary. Seeing this
21 change in nutritious school lunches [inaudible]
22 appetizing, sooner than later would be phenomenal.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Roma.

25 Next up is Philip Chong, and the following panel will

1
2 be Aideen Dela Cruz, followed by Jenny Valaderas
3 [sp?], David Ross Edelman [sp?], and Eloisa Trinidad,
4 and Tom Buckley [sp?]. Next up Philip Chong.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

6 PHILIP CHONG: Thank you, Chair Joseph
7 and Committee Members and Council Members. My name
8 is Philip Chong, Executive Director at Quincy Asian
9 Resource [inaudible] nonprofit organization mission
10 to foster and improve the social, cultural, and
11 economic and civil lives of immigrants and their
12 families in order to benefit all communities. We
13 always collaborate with different resources and
14 organization and partnership to provide culturally
15 competent services such as workforce development,
16 multi-lingual family and elder services, food
17 security programs, adult education and such. We also
18 a nonprofit to help support the [inaudible] program
19 as an anchor Pan-Asian meal provider. We help
20 mobilize the local immigrant-owned restaurant as a
21 food provider and then tap into the [inaudible]
22 sector [sic] to providing delivering network
23 workforce to support the 127 million meals delivery
24 to the homebound elders during the pandemic. Today,
25 I want to share the initiatives that we have recently

1
2 launched in partnership with Montefiore Hospital for
3 a public school in the Bronx, PS199, the program
4 called Pathway to Healthy Adulthoods. As a father of
5 two daughters, they also rely on lunch. No matter how
6 much we pack at home they never really-- they never
7 really eat it. They always go to the cafeteria with
8 the friends, and we know that there's many factors
9 when they're deciding what they want to eat, and many
10 times coming home they always complaint about how
11 much they don't like the food. And we know that
12 this-- whatever they eat-- whatever they learn and
13 choices with food is-- would stem [sic] in terms of
14 how they grow, how they grow up as adulthood. So,
15 it's very important for this program. This program,
16 Pathway to Healthy Adulthood, we call it PHA, is a
17 collaboration between Quincy Asian Resources and
18 Montefiore School Health Program is to educate and
19 empower youth and their family members to become
20 stewards of their health while fostering the
21 healthier school and community environments. The
22 goal of the PHA is to bring culturally sensitive
23 fresh produce and nutritional education to high-needs
24 schools in the Bronx. And what we know that is a New
25 York-- a New York City [inaudible] borough [sic].

1
2 The PHA we launched as a pilot as PS199 in the South
3 Bronx in April 2022. We plan to expand the program
4 to a total of six schools every year in the Bronx
5 starting in September. The challenges that we face,
6 as I said earlier, hungriest borough in New York
7 City. One of the four residents experience food
8 insecurity and ranked 62nd out of New York's 62
9 counties in health outcomes. As a resident of the
10 nation's poorest urban county, approximately 40
11 percent--

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You're time expired.

13 PHILIP CHONG: students live below the
14 poverty level. So for this program [inaudible] food
15 access, nutrition education, and social services. We
16 provide fourth and fifth grade the program called
17 Choose Health and Food Fun and Fitness Curriculum
18 developed by Cornell University. We also every two
19 weeks provide fresh produce boxes with eight to ten
20 items variety to 300 student and their family members
21 at 199, at PS199, and on top of it with our
22 multilingual social service outreach coordinator, we
23 provide different services including SNAP
24 application, food assistance program, adult education
25 workforce. We hope to expand this program

1 [inaudible]. This program is in the partnership with
2 Montefiore Hospital, Stop and Shop, City Harvest, and
3 also the support from the EGL Foundation. It's--
4 thank you for the opportunity to let me speak to the
5 committee, and thank you so much for supporting this,
6 the whole overarching in terms of improving health
7 and food access to our students. Thank you.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Philip.

10 Next up is Aideen Dela Cruz followed by Jenny
11 Valaderas [sp?], David Ross Edelman, Eloisa Trinidad
12 and Tom Buckley. Aideen?

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

14 AIDEEN DELA CRUZ: Good afternoon
15 Chairperson Joseph and to everyone. My name is
16 Aideen Dela Cruz, and I am a senior physical
17 therapist in the New York City Department of
18 Education for 16 years. I'm also the Vice Chair for
19 PT's [sic], for the PTOT [sic] Chapter in the UFT,
20 and one of the founding leaders of the grassroots
21 group, OTs and PTs for a Fair Contract. In 1975
22 President Ford signed into the law the Education for
23 All Handicap Children Act, also known as The Idea.
24 The law guarantees access to a free-- access to a
25 free appropriate public education in the least

1 restrictive environment to every child with a
2 disability. So many things have happened since for
3 our students with special needs. The DOE has offered
4 a smaller class setting appropriate for these
5 students when necessary. They're also offered
6 physical, occupational, speech, vision, and hearing
7 therapies as well as counseling as mandated in their
8 IEPs. They have been offered school buses to and
9 from school, use of elevators in order to access
10 their school environment, testing accommodations,
11 access to special education teachers,
12 paraprofessionals, adaptive equipment, adaptive paid
13 [sic] teachers, nurses, and so much more. However,
14 one thing that has been bothering me for years is
15 that the New York City Department of Education has
16 failed to provide one very final thing to our most
17 vulnerable students to thrive in our schools. In
18 1946, the school lunch program was made official when
19 President Truman signed the National School Lunch
20 Act. This act ensures all students all over the
21 United States a balanced meal while in the school.
22 this act is supposed to cover all students, but it
23 sadly does not cover special education students who
24 are on a special diet due to sensory and/or medical
25

1
2 issues like being fed through a G-tube, have
3 weaknesses in their oral, mandibular muscles, making
4 chewing difficult for them, have issues with
5 swallowing and more. I have personally seen students
6 starve during the school day because they cannot eat
7 the food offered in the cafeteria. I have seen
8 students who at 1:00 p.m. would sleep in a classroom
9 because their bodies have shut down from not having
10 fuel throughout the day. Some lucky students have
11 parents and guardians who would make sure that they
12 have an appropriate packed lunch or snacks to eat in
13 the school, but at last I have also witnessed a lot
14 of students with parents and guardians for whatever
15 reason fail to send food for these kids. School
16 staff can only do so much in reminding parents and
17 guardians to send food for their kids who have
18 special dietary needs. Now I implore you call, do not
19 forget the small population of special education
20 students who are need of special diets as you talk
21 about budgets. Maybe there's a way you can place in
22 their IEPs what kinds of food should be given to
23 these individuals during the school day as directed
24 by their medical providers, and maybe there's a way
25 that DOE can supply these. All students deserve a

1
2 balanced meal, and all means that the special
3 education students are included in that. Thank you
4 for this opportunity to speak in behalf of our
5 special education students.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: thank you for your
7 testimony. Next up we have Jenny Valaderas [sp?],
8 followed by David Ross Edelman [sp?].

9 JENNY VALADERAS: Good afternoon. I'm
10 Jenny Valaderas. I go to Union Square Academy for
11 Health Sciences. Food provided to us by the New York
12 City Department of Education is important to me, and
13 I believe it's something involved in students'
14 everyday life. By providing nutritious meals, schools
15 play a crucial role in creating lifetime healthy
16 eating habits. I've been served stale waffles during
17 breakfast and barely cooked chicken nuggets and
18 fries. During the pandemic students were served ham
19 and cheese sandwiches and peanut butter sandwiches,
20 which as a student who's eaten them before know that
21 they're not able to keep me energized throughout the
22 school day. School lunches meet the high nutritional
23 standards for a student to consume, but there are
24 other ways our school food can be nutritious and yet
25 tasty to eat. Changing our school foods would be a

1
2 huge improvement, because not only will students be
3 able to enjoy their meal but they will be able to
4 focus during their classes and go seven to eight
5 hours energized and full knowledge. Thank you.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thanks Jenny. Next
7 up is David Ross Edelman, followed by Eloisa
8 Trinidad.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time start now.

10 ELOISA TRINIDAD: Thank you. My name
11 Eloise Trinidad-- sorry. My name is Eloisa Trinidad
12 and I am the Executive Director at Chilis on Wheels
13 in New York. Thank you to Chairperson Rita C. Joseph
14 as well as the members of the New York City Council
15 Committee on Education for holding today's oversight
16 hearing and the opportunity to submit this testimony.
17 Chilis on Wheels works to make healthy food
18 accessible to communities in need. We do this
19 through direct food relief, nutrition education in
20 schools, mentorship and policy work to address the
21 ongoing vulnerabilities and injustices of the food
22 system. During the pandemic we expanded our services
23 to include home grocery delivery to students and
24 their families as well as plant-based community
25 [inaudible] to serve students 24/7. We also set up

1 fresh organic produce distribution and grocery
2 distribution at DOE sites in Brownsville and the
3 South Bronx. We serve and continue to serve
4 thousands of food insecure individuals across New
5 York City [inaudible] our program during the
6 pandemic. 95 percent of the people and students who
7 request our services are not vegan, but have dietary
8 restrictions or simply want better tasting food that
9 is healthy or ingredients to cook from scratch. We're
10 incredibly grateful for all the improvements in
11 school that often has done in expanding culturally-
12 relevant and plant-based meals. However, dietary
13 restrictions and cultural relevancy do not disappear
14 during an emergency, a pandemic, during the summer,
15 or during part of the week. Therefore, those
16 requiring plant-based meals should have options every
17 day and they must be culturally relevant, which
18 explains the success of plantains in schools. To
19 address food insecurity, we must meet the needs of
20 everyone, especially those with dietary restrictions
21 as those populations have more challenging of a time
22 accessing meals when food insecure. Fully plant-based
23 meals as daily options should extend beyond hummus
24 and pretzels and peanut butter and jelly as these are
25

1 snacks and not adequate meals. Culturally relevant
2 plant-based meals meet the requirements of those
3 practicing Hinduism, Rastafarianism, Jainism [sp?],
4 Buddhism, 7th Day Adventist, veganism, as those
5 philosophies and religions require animal-free diets,
6 and in many cases they can also meet the needs of
7 those practicing Islam and Judaism with proper
8 certification. The black population is also the
9 fastest growing demographic in the US to practice
10 veganism, and much of our youth is passionate about
11 climate change and animal welfare. All students
12 should have a choice beyond traditional cultural
13 relevance and feel empowered and supported in
14 deciding what they want to eat. This is an equity
15 issue. In addition, according to the National Center
16 for Bio Technology Information, adequate dietary
17 fiber intake is associated with better digestive
18 health and reduced risk for heart disease, stroke,
19 hypertension, and certain gastrointestinal disorders,
20 obesity, Type II diabetes, and certain cancers.
21 However, national consumption indicates that only
22 about five percent of the population, which includes
23 children, meet this requirements, and are not getting
24 adequate fiber intake. Therefore, providing adequate
25

1
2 and culturally relevant plant-based meals daily as an
3 option and in emergencies can potentially increase
4 our students' fiber intake, setting them up for a
5 healthy and proper future. Meals should not only be
6 plant-based;--

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time
8 expired.

9 ELOISA TRINIDAD: they should be
10 culturally relevant. As far as milk, about 75
11 percent of the global population cannot digest
12 lactose after infancy. This percentage increases in
13 BIPOC populations, and it is not a disability.
14 Specific populations of color with high levels of
15 lactase [sic] deficiency include about 95 percent of
16 Asians, about 80 percent of African-Americans, and up
17 to 100 percent of Native Americans, and about 80
18 percent of Hispanics, according to the National
19 Institutes of Health. In addition, about 80 percent
20 of Ashkenazi Jews are also lactose intolerant. New
21 York City schools are not required to provide a
22 student with a non-dairy substitute unless their
23 parent submits a note from a physician or a
24 caretaker. There requirement for a physician's note
25 creates a financial and administrative burden for

1
2 parents, and disproportionately affects students of
3 color. The cost of a physician visit and the lost
4 time from work from a parent is unnecessary hurdle
5 that prevents students from receiving appropriate
6 nutrition at school. Students should be able to
7 freely choose nutritious drink that--

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time
9 expired.

10 ELOISA TRINIDAD: that will not make them
11 sick throughout the day. Lactose intolerance is not
12 a disability. The inability to digest lactose is a
13 specific genetic trait like being left-handed. It
14 happens in most places around the world. Therefore,
15 parents, students and school need more flexibility to
16 ensure the student's meal program serves nutritious
17 meals to all participants. In conclusion, we would
18 like to see dietary restrictions that address more
19 intentionally plant-based options become more
20 culturally relevant, and provided daily with plant-
21 based options to all students so everyone can have
22 equal access to nutritious meals. We would also like
23 to see more intentional nutrition in health education
24 so that culture around food can shift towards a
25 healthier and more sustainable one. We urge the

1
2 Council to fund our school system as well as our
3 community-based organizations to make this happen.

4 Thank you.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your
6 testimony. Next up is Tom Buckley [sp?].

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

8 TOM BUCKLEY: Thank you, Ms. Chairwoman
9 and Education Committee Members. I know your meeting
10 is focused on the important topic of school food, but
11 I would like to share my thoughts about school
12 safety, because without it there would be no kids at
13 school to eat school food. Your meeting was the
14 first one I could join since Uvalde. Thank you for
15 this opportunity. I'm G. Buckley, a 10-year-old New
16 York City resident, and I'm speaking because we have
17 to help stop gun violence in schools. One way we can
18 do this is by installing locking doors. If we
19 installed locking doors in schools, we could trap
20 intruders long enough for the police to get there in
21 time and take over the scene. Another way we could
22 make schools a safer environment for kids is by
23 adding one or two more security guards in every
24 school. This would be tougher for intruders to get
25 inside the school, and these security guards should

1 be armed with a Taser at all times when on duty.
2 Arming our teachers will not help. one more way we
3 can make school safer is by adding scanners at
4 entrance doors, not just scanners in a fourth or a
5 half of schools. We need scanners in all schools. It
6 does not matter if the school is Catholic, private,
7 all boys, all girls, or public or co-ed. We need
8 scanners at the entrance doors of all schools. I
9 made the poster you see on the screen about two days
10 after the Uvalde shooting. At our local park, dozens
11 of kids and some adults signed it. I told some of the
12 kids that I would speak to lawmakers, and they asked
13 if the lawmakers could speak with them. Thank you.

14
15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your
16 testimony. That's all of the panelists we have
17 signed up. If we have inadvertently left anyone off
18 who would like to testify, please use the raise hand
19 function at the bottom of the Zoom chat and we will
20 call on you. Seeing none. That's all the witnesses
21 we have today.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I would like to
23 thank everyone who testified today. Thank you and
24 see you at the next hearing.

25 [gavel]

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date July 27, 2022