

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

----- X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

----- X

Wednesday, January 25, 2023

Start: 1:16 p.m.

Recess: 4:56 p.m.

HELD AT: Committee Room, City Hall

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

COUNCILMEMBERS:

- Shaun Abreu
- Alexa Avilés
- Carmen N. De La Rosa
- Eric Dinowitz
- Oswald Feliz
- James F. Gennaro
- 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)

Daniel Weisberg
First Deputy Chancellor
New York City Public Schools

Sarah Kleinhandler
Chief Enrollment Officer
New York City Public Schools

Nadiya Helaifi Chadha
Senior Director for Strategic Affairs
New York City Public Schools

Kenyatte Reid
Executive Director
Office of Safety and Youth Development
New York City Public Schools

Brad Lander
New York City Comptroller
New York City Office of the Comptroller

Sadye Campoamor
Chief Equity Officer
New York City Office of the Comptroller

Julianne Huang
Student Staten Island Tech
Youth Advocate
Anti-Bullying and Harassment Campaign
Coalition for Asian American Children and
Families
Asian American Student Advocacy Project

Hudson Chou
Student, NYC iSchool, Youth Advocate
Coalition for Asian American Children and
Families
Asian American Student Advocacy Project

Sandra Liu[ph]
Student, Youth Advocate
Coalition for Asian American Children and
Families
Asian American Student Advocacy Project

Bonnie Chi[ph]
Student, Youth Advocate
Language Access Campaign
Coalition for Asian American Children and
Families
Asian American Student Advocacy Project

Kaushik Das
Vice President
New York City Public Schools, District 2

Alysa O'Shea
Queens Parent-Elected Representative
Citywide Council on High Schools

Steven Stowe
President
Community Education Council, District 20

Nyah Berg
Executive Director
New York Appleseed

Jennifer Choi
Founder
NYC Parents of Teens with Disabilities

Zarith Pineda
Founder and Executive Director
Territorial Empathy

Ursula Zhang[ph]
Member
Community Education Council, District 3

Kulsoom Tapal
Education Policy Coordinator
Coalition for Asian American Children and
Families

Ellen McHugh
New York City Resident
Parent of a Deaf Child

Jenna Provenzano
Youth Transition Specialist
Center for Independence of the Disabled

Lupe Hernandez
New York City Resident
Parent of a Fourth Grader

Casey Cohn
District 2 Resident
Parent of a Third and Seventh Grader

Chien Kwok
District 2 Resident
Parent of 2 students

Nikos Papageorgiou
New York City Resident
Parent, Bronx Science High School and
Wagner Middle School Senior

Gavin Healy
District 2 Resident
Parent of IEP Student

Derek Tan
District 2 Resident
Parent of 2 Students

Maud Maron
New York City Resident
Parent of 4 Students

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good afternoon. At this time,
3 can the host please start the webinar?

4 Good afternoon and welcome to the New York City
5 Council hearing of the Committee on Education. At
6 this time, can everyone please silence your cell
7 phones? If you wish to testify today, please come up
8 to the Sergeant's desk. So you can-- and fill out
9 one of these testimony slips. Written testimony can
10 be emailed to testimony@council.NYC.gov. Again, that
11 is testimony@council.nyc.gov. Thank you for your
12 cooperation. Chair, we are ready to begin.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you and welcome all to
14 today's hearings.

15 [GAVEL]

16 Good afternoon, and welcome to today's hearing on
17 DOE's new admissions process. I'm Rita Joseph, Chair
18 of the Education Committee. Thank you to everyone
19 present here today and those of you who are
20 testifying remotely. At today's hearings, we will
21 hear-- we will also hear testimony on the following
22 legislation: Introduction 338 and Introduction
23 number 403, both of which I'm proud to sponsor, and
24 Resolution 129, sponsored by councilmember Bottcher.
25 We will hear more about this legislation shortly.

2 In September, DOE announced several changes to
3 its admissions process. And we are here today to
4 learn more about how these changes were made and
5 their potential impacts on our students. Before
6 discussing these changes, I will provide a brief
7 background of the previous admissions process.

8 As we all know, the COVID 19 pandemic caused
9 severe disruptions in instruction and canceled state
10 testing, causing the previous administration to issue
11 a pause on the use of all screens for middle school
12 admissions for 2021, 2022, and 2023 school year
13 admissions-- 2022 and 2023 school years, with
14 students selected through a lottery-based and system
15 instead. Those screens remained at high-school
16 levels. As of spring 2022, screened programs no
17 longer considered state standardized test scores and
18 last year's admissions criteria at at least 85
19 average for students to qualify for priority access
20 to screened schools.

21 During the time of these revised admissions
22 policies, DOE schools saw some progress towards
23 integrating the largest and most diverse, yet one of
24 the most segregated school districts, in the country.

2 According to DOE after removing screened students
3 from low-income families who were matched to in
4 demand middle schools rose to 48% and an increase of
5 seven percentage points. Selective high schools
6 throughout the city saw similar changes. At the
7 city's 27 highest performing screened schools, 40%
8 students accepted last year were black and Latino, up
9 from 28% in 2020.

10 In September, DOE announced changes to the middle
11 school admissions process, allowing each district
12 superintendent to consult with their community to
13 decide whether or not they wanted to keep middle
14 school screen programs for the upcoming school year.
15 I'm proud of the decisions of many superintendents
16 who continue to make positive steps towards
17 integration. With only 59 middle schools reinstating
18 screenings down significantly from 196 middle schools
19 that screened students before the pandemic.

20 However, there is still work to be done. DOE
21 also announce more restrictive high school admissions
22 criteria for screening program, which will restrict
23 top-tier admission priority to students who final
24 seventh grade point average at least 90 and fall in
25 the highest performing 15% of their school or

2 citywide. This change will substantially reduce the
3 pool of those eligible for top-tier priority next
4 year.

5 When making changes to high school admissions
6 criteria for screen programs, did DOE consider how
7 this significant drop in students receiving first
8 priority will impact integration efforts in our
9 city's top high schools? In addition, last April,
10 the administration unveiled a plan to expand gifted
11 and talented programs, adding 100 kindergarten seats
12 and 1,000 third grade seats citywide. However, many
13 critiques contend that G&T program contribute to a
14 segregated system, citing lack of diversity.

15 As we look to the future how do we ensure that
16 these new programs do not historically segregate the
17 paths? The benefit of school diversity to all
18 children are undeniable, which is what led to Council
19 to enact Local 225 of 2019, mandating the
20 establishment of that District Diversity Working
21 Group in every community school district.

22 Though DOE began the phase-in of District
23 Diversity Working Group after this law was intact,
24 the current status of these working groups is
25 unknown. How many districts have established working

2 groups thus far? What efforts if any, is DOE making
3 to expand the working group model to all districts?
4 These are some of the questions the committee would
5 like to answer at today's hearing. Furthermore, we'd
6 like to learn more about centralized MySchools
7 application portal, which now covers admission from
8 pre-K to high school, including G&T admissions.

9 While centralized MySchool application process is
10 meant to simplify the admissions process, the online
11 portal has a history of creating headaches for
12 families, with most recently the website crashed the
13 night before the December 1 deadline.

14 The Portal also presents challenges for families
15 who cannot read, lack access to a computer, or
16 familiar with technology.

17 As a result, critics charged at the complicated
18 process contribute to the city status as one of the
19 most segregated school system in the country.

20 I want to thank everyone who is testifying today,
21 I want to thank the City Council staff as well as my
22 own for all of their work they put in for today's
23 hearing.

24 I'd like to remind everyone who wishes to testify
25 today must fill out a witness slip which is located

2 at the desk of the Sergeant at Arms near the entrance
3 room. To allow as many people as possible to testify
4 testimonies will be limited to three minutes per
5 person whether you're testifying on Zoom or in
6 person. I'm also going to ask my colleagues to limit
7 their questions and comments to five minutes.

8 Finally, I look forward to hearing testimony on
9 my two bills, Introduction 338, which is establishing
10 a bully intervention Task Force, and Introduction
11 403, which is a bill to distribute IDNYC applications
12 to all high school students. We will also hear from
13 Resolution number 129 calling on DOE to carry
14 instruction on bike safety in all New York City
15 schools.

16 Before I'd like before I begin I'd like to also
17 acknowledge my colleagues, Councilmember Louis,
18 Councilmember Ung, Councilmember Vernikov,
19 Councilmember Menin, Councilmember Bottcher,
20 Councilmember Dinowitz, Councilmember Abreu,
21 Councilmember Lee, and Councilmember Hanif. And
22 remotely, Councilmember Schulman and Councilmember
23 Sanchez. I would like to turn to Councilmember
24 Bottcher for quick remarks on Resolution 129.

2 COUNCILMEMBER BOTTCHER: Thank you so much, Chair
3 Joseph, for holding this hearing today on my
4 Resolution calling upon the Department of Education
5 to fulfill its obligation to offer bicycle safety
6 instruction at all schools.

7 Cycling has grown in popularity a lot in recent
8 years, and certainly in my 20 years in New York, it's
9 become more and more popular, but that growth hasn't
10 been accompanied by any meaningful bike safety
11 education in schools. At a time when more and more
12 young people are getting on bikes, it's so important
13 that they be taught the rules of the road and how to
14 ride safely and responsibly. And I think my
15 colleagues can agree that we've all heard more and
16 more concerns from constituents about cyclist
17 behavior, riding on the sidewalks, and other kinds of
18 things like that.

19 We've got to provide safe infrastructure for
20 cyclists. We have to ensure that the rules are
21 enforced, but we also have to teach young people,
22 starting at an early age, about the benefits of
23 cycling and the rules around cycling. New York State
24 Education law requires that all school districts
25 teach bike safety in schools. Not many people know

2 that. But very few schools, we believe, anecdotally,
3 are teaching bike safe safety education. That's why
4 I introduced this resolution in partnership with
5 Councilmember Joseph and Selvina Brooks-powers, and
6 really appreciate this opportunity to bring light to
7 this issue. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Councilmember
9 Bottcher. And of course, I'm your partner in this.
10 I'd also like to recognize Councilmember De La Rosa.
11 And I'll now turn it over to committee Council.

12 COUNSEL: Good afternoon, everyone. I will now
13 administer the oath. Daniel Weisberg, Sarah
14 Kleinhandler, Nadiya Helaifi Chadha, Kenyatte Reid.
15 I will call on each of you individually for a
16 response. Please raise your right hand. Do you
17 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing
18 but the truth before this committee and to respond
19 honestly to council member questions.

20 Daniel Weisberg?

21 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: I do.

22 COUNSEL: Sarah Kleinhandler?

23 MS. KLEINHANDLER: I do.

24 COUNSEL: Nadiya Helaifi Chadha?

25 MS. CHADHA: I do.

2 COUNSEL: And Kenyatte Reid?

3 MR. REID: I do.

4 COUNSEL: Thank you so much. I'll now turn it
5 back to the Chair.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, you may start.

7 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Thank you very much,
8 Chair Joseph and Councilmembers. I'm grateful to you
9 for holding this hearing on these important issues.

10 I'll start with some good news, which is my
11 opening remarks, and will be very brief. And then
12 I'll turn it over to Sarah Kleinhandler. My name is
13 Dan Weisberg. I'm the First Deputy Chancellor of New
14 York City Public Schools. I'm very pleased to be
15 here today with our Chief Enrollment Officer, Sarah
16 Kleinhandler, and her Chief Deputy Nadiya Chadha, as
17 well as other talented members of our team.

18 In a moment, I will turn it over to Chief
19 Enrollment Officer Kleinhandler, who will speak in
20 greater depth about our admissions processes and
21 policies.

22 Before she does, I just want to talk briefly
23 about our broad vision for our school system as a
24 whole. It is our fundamental belief and guiding
25 principle that every student can achieve excellence,

2 and every school has the capacity to make that
3 happen. We just need to support them in getting
4 there, both our schools and our students. I often
5 say that brilliance is everywhere. Brilliance is in
6 all of our neighborhoods, it's in all of our schools,
7 it's an all of our students. Opportunity,
8 unfortunately, is not.

9 Our entire administration is focused on uplifting
10 all schools and all students. In order to accomplish
11 this, the chancellor has laid out his four pillars
12 that are guiding our efforts to reimagine New York
13 City Public Schools and the student experience.
14 Chancellor Banks's first pillar, and probably our
15 most important pillar, is community engagement. And
16 that has been central to our work since the
17 beginning. And it is a value that's reflected
18 clearly in our policymaking about admissions. These
19 policies are not designed to reflect one particular
20 ideology, or to find a one-size-fits-all solution
21 that doesn't exist, but to facilitate a system that
22 is responsive to our families and communities to the
23 greatest possible extent.

24 Chancellor Banks and I strongly believe in the
25 power of diversity in our schools. On a personal

2 level, I'm not only the proud product of the New York
3 City Public Schools, but I was blessed, truly blessed
4 to have attended integrated schools, where my
5 classmates and friends were white, black, Latino,
6 Latina, Asian, low-income, high-income, and
7 everywhere in between. I understood at a young age
8 the fundamental truth that differences among us are
9 the engines of creativity, laughter, and brilliance.
10 And that understanding has been a foundation for my
11 entire career in education.

12 Research reflects the tangible and important
13 benefits of diversity in our schools, higher
14 graduation rates, higher test scores, but also
15 helping students to become more civically minded and
16 tolerant. So we're committed to supporting
17 integration efforts that are community driven by and
18 for families is the only way these efforts truly
19 succeed at a local level.

20 And we're not going to wait for integration to
21 progress across our communities before we act. Our
22 main focus is to ensure that all of our city schools
23 are high quality, responsive to the needs and demands
24 of local communities, and our students and families.
25 This is our charge. And one the Chancellor has

2 repeatedly made clear. And with that, once again,
3 thank you Chair Joseph and members of the Committee
4 and I'll turn it over to Chief Enrollment Officer
5 Sarah Kleinhandler for her remarks.

6 MS. KLEINHANDLER: Good afternoon, Chair Joseph
7 and members of the Education Committee here today.
8 My name is Sarah Kleinhandler, and I'm the Chief
9 Enrollment Officer for New York City Public Schools.
10 I am joined here today by Nadiya Chadha, Senior
11 Director for Strategic Affairs in my office. Thank
12 you for the opportunity to discuss the admissions
13 process for the New York City Public Schools and the
14 work of the Office of Student enrollment.

15 Before I begin, I'd like to share a little about
16 my background. I've been with the Department of
17 Education for 26 years. I began my career in October
18 1996 As a high school English teacher at Louis D.
19 Brandeis High School in District Three. I was hired
20 in October in response to the long line of students
21 wrapped around the building for the first two months
22 of school waiting for placement. The image of the
23 line of students replicated itself year after year.
24 Later I became the Assistant Principal Life Sciences
25 Secondary School, then a Literacy Instructional

2 Specialist, and eventually came to the office of
3 student enrollment, where I oversaw the launch of our
4 online applications and waitlists, while striving to
5 make the experience of fair and better one for
6 families and schools. Even now, I remember the line
7 of students around the building and keep that in mind
8 as I think about the enrollment experience I want
9 families to have.

10 The Office of Student Enrollment manages
11 admissions and enrollment for over 300,000 students
12 each year. We run the admissions processes for 3K,
13 Pre K kindergarten, Gifted and Talented, middle
14 school, and high school. Our 12 family welcome
15 centers support families who are newly arrived to New
16 York City and need a school placement as well as
17 families who need a transfer or require other
18 enrollment help. The Office of Student Enrollment
19 also oversees the P311 call center. And we have
20 teams dedicated to outreach and enrollment for
21 special populations like students with disabilities
22 and students in temporary housing. We offer services
23 to families in multiple languages.

2 To put it simply, our goal is to make applying to
3 schools simple, easy, and intuitive for families at
4 every grade level.

5 From the moment Chancellor Banks took office a
6 little over a year ago, he laid out a vision for New
7 York City Public Schools that included engaging
8 families to be our true partners. That commitment to
9 community engagement has driven everything happening
10 in our school system, particularly when it comes to
11 our admissions policies and processes. Over the last
12 year, the Office of Student Enrollment has renewed
13 our investment and community engagement to listen
14 critically and implement suggestions and feedback
15 from families where we can. This past spring we
16 launched a listening tour with the purpose of
17 soliciting ideas and perspectives on how to best
18 improve the admissions process, hosting over 30
19 meetings with a variety of stakeholders, including
20 parents, and community and advocacy groups, school
21 leaders, school staff and students. I don't know if
22 you if all of you have the deck, but if you do, if
23 you turn to slide two, you can find more details
24 about the groups we've heard from.

2 While not perfect, we have made engagement and
3 feedback an integral part of our work rather than
4 just paying lip service to it. For many parents,
5 Admissions is the first contact they have with New
6 York City Public Schools so it is essential that we
7 make the enrollment process accessible and seamless.
8 Tackling the Chancellor's vision of reimagining the
9 student experience must start with Admissions.
10 Family feedback has prompted many immediate and
11 tangible improvements in our processes, specifically
12 as highlighted on Slide 3. After two years of
13 extremely delayed timelines, the middle school and
14 high school admissions applications were opened
15 earlier this year. An earlier application launch
16 means earlier offers for families which this year is
17 early spring. This timeline enables schools and
18 families to more easily plan and ask questions of the
19 schools their children will be attending. Relatedly
20 we publicly released the dates of application
21 openings in advance so that schools and families
22 could plan and prepare for open houses research
23 schools and apply on time. As always, all our
24 resources are available in multiple languages.

2 To make the application and admissions process
3 more transparent and intuitive. We launched a
4 Citywide Events Calendar within the MySchools
5 application system, which is available in the nine
6 top DOE languages. Every school in our system is
7 encouraged to use the calendar to advertise and
8 attract students and families to open houses,
9 information sessions, and more. There are currently
10 over 3400 events listed across all our admissions
11 processes. The calendar is searchable by grade span
12 and can be filtered to each family's needs.

13 We also made other improvements in MySchools
14 including improving the online tool for submitting
15 auditions to schools, a shift in practice that
16 happened during the pandemic. This year, families
17 received an email confirming their successful upload
18 as well as the receipt for all types of submissions.

19 For middle and high school we added more
20 information to each school and program's MySchool
21 page, including a filter for applicants proceed,
22 which helps families search for low, middle, and high
23 demand programs as they build a balanced application.
24 After offers are released families are added to
25 waitlists, or can use waitlist to find another school

2 option. When waitlists open this spring, we will
3 display information about how many waitlist offers
4 were made by school in the past, giving families more
5 context about their waitlist position.

6 Additionally, this past year we extended
7 waitlists to close in September so that any open
8 seats are filled fairly and transparently. We will
9 continue to implement improvements on an ongoing
10 basis to make the admissions process as
11 straightforward and family-centered as we can.

12 The family feedback we received also led to
13 changes in the middle and high school admissions
14 process. For middle school, which you can find on
15 Slide 4, fifth grade families have long had the
16 opportunities to apply to a range of middle school
17 options, typically within their local community
18 school district. Prior to the pandemic, many
19 programs admitted students through random selection,
20 while others chose students based on their academic
21 records, which is called screening. During the
22 pandemic, there was a city wide pause on screening at
23 middle school because there was inadequate academic
24 data to enable schools to select students.

2 Now that students have by and large return to the
3 norm, Chancellor Banks asked each superintendent to
4 conduct engagement in their communities, including
5 their CEC's, principals, families, and others, to
6 determine if and where middle school screened
7 programs should resume based on the district's
8 instructional and community needs. Some ultimately
9 kept their districts completely unscreened, while
10 others selected a few schools to be screened based on
11 historical practice and community feedback.

12 As a result of their thoughtful engagement, each
13 district has a tailored admissions process that has
14 brought the overall number of schools with academic
15 screens down to 59 from 196 prior to the pandemic.
16 This robust process ensured that decisions about
17 middle school screens reflected local needs and were
18 communicated to families in advance of the middle
19 school application opening in October.

20 Moving to high school as summarized on Slide 5,
21 we have more than 700 programs across 400 schools for
22 students to apply to. Each year, eighth graders can
23 apply to as many as 12 schools. Like middle schools,
24 high schools have different admissions methods. Most
25 are open programs, where the only thing a family

2 needs to do is apply to the school and students are
3 then selected randomly. Others so called Ed-Op
4 Programs select randomly but aim to admit an
5 academically mixed group of students by prioritizing
6 a portion for students from each academic group.

7 In addition, there are approximately 120 high
8 schools that use screening, admitting students based
9 on their academic record, and sometimes additional
10 school-based assessments such as an essay or
11 portfolio. Historically, each screened high school
12 had its own criteria for admissions and conducted its
13 own evaluation process which was confusing for
14 families. During the pandemic, the DOE moved schools
15 to a simplified screening process using more
16 standardized criteria. There was also a shift away
17 from having schools handle their own ranking of
18 students, and instead had the MySchool system rank
19 students automatically. Families have told us that
20 those simplifications made admissions easier and more
21 transparent, so we've kept it in place.

22 Last year screened high schools admitted students
23 in groups, with top performing students in group one
24 being admitted first than lower performing students
25 in group two being admitted next, and so on. Under

2 last year's screening criteria, approximately 60% of
3 the applicants fell into group one. In our
4 engagement around admissions, we heard from many
5 stakeholders that the criteria for the top group was
6 not stringent enough for screened programs,
7 inadequately rewarding some students for their hard
8 work. At the same time, we heard the shift to
9 standard admissions criteria helped make the process
10 simpler to navigate.

11 In addition, the group admissions method resulted
12 in greater diversity and representation at some of
13 our most in-demand high schools.

14 These are not easy decisions to make. We look at
15 our process last year, took the feedback, and
16 adjusted the high school process specifically for
17 screened schools.

18 We modified the criteria for the screening
19 process so that this year any student who is in the
20 top performing 15% of their school, or the top 15% of
21 the city is included in group one. This change
22 narrowed the top group to about 20% of students. At
23 the same time it preserved access for students from
24 every middle school across the city, allowing for
25 greater diversity at screened programs compared to

2 before the pandemic. As you can see in the chart on
3 Slide 5 we anticipate the demographics of the
4 students in group one to be similar to previous
5 years.

6 Thanks to the feedback we received from families
7 and our ability to make these changes in early fall,
8 we were able to move up the timelines for both
9 processes. High school offers will be released in
10 March and middle school offers will be released in
11 April. In the past two cycles, offers were released
12 in late spring and early summer, which left little
13 time for families and schools to prepare before the
14 end of the school year.

15 In addition to a more thoughtful process,
16 Chancellor Banks but leaves firmly that while there
17 are academically brilliant children in every
18 neighborhood, many students have to travel long hours
19 to reach academically accelerated learning high
20 schools. To fill that gap in some underserved
21 communities of color, three new accelerated learning
22 academies will be opened in fall 2024, informed by
23 community needs. These schools will be located in
24 the South Bronx, Ocean Hill Brownsville, and
25 Southeast Queens.

2 As with middle and high school for kindergarten
3 and Gifted and Talented admissions, we strove for
4 greater simplicity and access. For years there were
5 two distinct processes for kindergarten and Gifted
6 and Talented admissions which resulted in two
7 different offers on two different timelines, creating
8 more work and uncertainty for families. Recognizing
9 an opportunity for simplification by combining the
10 two applications, we surveyed a representative group
11 of pre-K parents and receive more than 600 responses.
12 The majority of those surveyed were in favor of
13 combining the applications which will allow us to
14 make offers to families sooner. We hope that
15 combining these processes will raise awareness of a
16 variety of kindergarten offerings to all applicants
17 and simplify the admissions experience.

18 Once families apply for G&T children are
19 evaluated either by their current pre-K teacher or by
20 staff from the Division of Early Childhood Education,
21 using a nomination tool that reviews gifted
22 qualities.

23 These changes are building on the expansion of
24 Gifted and Talented seats that was introduced last
25 year in response to DOE's engagement with a diverse

2 group of parents and community stakeholders. This
3 administration added 100 kindergarten seats and 1,000
4 3rd grade G&T seats, expanding both entry points to
5 all districts. With all of these changes, we are
6 making significant strides towards a more equitable
7 and accessible system.

8 Finally, for 3-K and pre-K, we will continue to
9 work with our partners in the early childhood
10 division to ensure that we are capturing feedback and
11 adjusting where we can. We are glad to announce that
12 both applications opened this morning. And as with
13 other grade bands, interested families may apply to
14 up to 12 choices. There are a range of seat types
15 for 3-K and pre-K such as full-day seats, which are
16 available to all applicants, as well extended day and
17 year, or Headstart seats, which are only available to
18 families that qualify based on need or income. Every
19 pre-K applicant receives an offer.

20 I will now turn to the proposed legislation.
21 Intro 0403 would require the Department of Education
22 to distribute information on, an applications for
23 IDNYC to all high school students. We support the
24 goal of this legislation and look forward to working
25 with the Council on it. Intro 0338 establishes a

2 Bullying Prevention Task Force. The Department of
3 Education is committed to ensuring that schools are
4 places where all students feel safe, welcomed, and
5 supported. Our Office of Safety and Youth
6 Development has been deeply invested in this work,
7 including through ongoing collaboration with
8 community stakeholders, and we have made significant
9 progress so we look forward to further conversations
10 and working with the Council on this bill.

11 I want to take a moment to acknowledge the DOE
12 and my team in the office of student enrollment for
13 all the work they have put into making the enrollment
14 experiences for newly arriving students as seamless
15 as possible. We have had staff at the navigation
16 center, hotels, and our family welcome centers
17 available to counsel and support thousands of newly
18 arriving families in their language so their children
19 can begin attending school immediately. I'm proud to
20 be on their team.

21 Thank you for this opportunity to share our
22 improvements to the admissions processes over the
23 past year. As I said earlier in the testimony, we
24 are looking forward to continuing our practice of
25 engaging with communities throughout the year to

2 ensure that we are responding thoughtfully to
3 community needs. We plan to hold more listening
4 sessions with families and community groups in
5 collaboration with the DOE's family and community
6 engagement arm so that we can continue to improve and
7 provide the best possible admissions process for our
8 students. We welcome the Council's feedback and
9 questions as always. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. I'd like to take
11 a moment to recognize Councilmember Feliz,
12 Councilmember Narcisse, Councilmembers Hanks and
13 Avilés. Thank you.

14 So thank you. How does the DOE communicate
15 changes to the admissions process, particularly those
16 for middle school and high school to prospective
17 students and their families? How do you know that
18 the information is getting out to all parents?

19 MS. KLEINHANDLER: Family-- we hold family-facing
20 information sessions with interpretation in all nine
21 top DOE home languages. And these sessions provide
22 an overview of the process and opportunity to ask
23 questions.

24 We have a number of tutorials on our website to
25 guide families through the MySchools experience, how

2 to make decisions about what schools to apply to, and
3 other key needs. We publish all of the changes on
4 our website, which is translated in all nine
5 languages. We send dozens of emails which are also
6 translated through the process to all families who
7 have signed up for our updates or have MySchools
8 accounts. We send welcome letters to all fifth grade
9 families to help them set up a MySchools account.
10 For eighth graders most of those families already had
11 MySchools accounts, and if they don't we work with
12 their schools to get them set up. We work with
13 superintendents to disseminate information to CECs
14 and other community members. We attend community
15 meetings like advocacy councils, and CECs to provide
16 information and answer questions.

17 And most importantly, for middle and high school
18 admissions, we provide robust trainings for all
19 school staff and counselors, as they are the main
20 support for families navigating the admissions
21 processes, and counselors are given presentations and
22 guidance to support them in the work. Families, of
23 course can also visit all of our 12 family welcome
24 centers, or call our call center. And of course,

2 there's there are language supports there to help
3 those families.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, so now you-- we
5 discuss the process, the changes. How is that
6 communicated to the families?

7 MS. KLEINHANDLER: The same way. We-- we send--
8 well, when we met with-- when we met with and talked
9 with the advocacy groups, and community-based
10 organizations, we had them help us get the word out.
11 We also have all of that information on our website.
12 We also told-- told all of our superintendents in
13 schools, and we rely on them heavily to share with
14 their school communities as well.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And a parent who has no
16 access to technology, a parent who does not-- English
17 is not their first language, how is that communicated
18 to them as well? And let's say I am a parent that
19 does not speak English. What if I don't read my
20 native language? You also have to keep that in mind
21 as well.

22 MS. KLEINHANDLER: So we've been flexible with
23 application deadlines, for sure. We never find fault
24 with a family who has-- who has an issue with our
25 system or our processes. We provide extra support

2 with school staff to remind them about how to provide
3 families with login information. We rely heavily on
4 the guidance counselors at schools, and we use our
5 Family Welcome Center counselors as well to help-- to
6 help families navigate the process.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And what were your-- who are
8 your CBO partners on the ground that was helping you
9 get this message out?

10 MS. KLEINHANDLER: I have the list. Specifically
11 it is-- it's-- it's in the-- it's in the deck that I
12 gave. Our CBO partners are NYIC, Advocates for
13 Children, Place, The Feerick Center, Appleseed, CICF,
14 of course, our UFT counselors, CCHS, and Integrate
15 NYC, to name a few.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I know at one point you guys
17 used to be really on the ground doing grassroots
18 reach-- outreach to parents. Is that model still
19 being used inside the DOE? As we've seen families
20 have changed drastically over the years.

21 MS. KLEINHANDLER: We do-- we do use the on-the-
22 ground method to reach out to families. We also use
23 our Family Welcome Centers, and we rely heavily on
24 superintendents and their staff as well to help us
25 get the word out.

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, I'll come back. So
3 what steps have been taken to provide adequate
4 support and resources to families navigating this new
5 admissions process? Have you increased guidance
6 counselors? Have-- have you invested in after-school
7 programming for navigating middle school and high
8 school admissions. Also has the DOE invested in
9 professional development for guidance counselors and
10 school leaders on topic on how to navigate this new
11 process?

12 MS. KLEINHANDLER: In terms of guidance
13 counselors. So the Office of Student Enrollment
14 doesn't oversee guidance counselors, we-- so that is
15 not in our purview. So hiring counselors as part of
16 school staffing.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Someone is talking. Can you
18 please keep it down? Thank you.

19 MS. KLEINHANDLER: In terms of investing in after
20 school programming for navigating middle school and
21 high school admissions, I think that's a great idea.
22 Some programs do exist at the school level, and we
23 work with staff there to support them, but that
24 certainly is something that we would consider moving
25 forward. And in terms of professional development,

2 my office provides extensive training to schools and
3 to counselors around admissions processes, and we
4 always make ourselves available if schools or
5 communities need additional support.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Can you please bring the mic
7 a little closer to you?

8 MS. KLEINHANDLER: Oh, yes, sorry.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

10 We-- I heard you say that guidance counselors are
11 not in your purview. Whose-- whose leadership is
12 that under? And how can we-- how can that get out to
13 the schools where-- middle school and high school
14 processes, where the guidance counselor support comes
15 in a lot in supporting the parents? How do we get
16 more guidance counselors in there to help them
17 navigate this new system that you set up?

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: I apologize, Chair.
19 I'm not sure I heard all of the question, but the--
20 the funding for guidance counselors and social
21 workers, as you know, has-- has been increased, so
22 that we see an increased number system wide. The
23 deployment of guidance counselors and the training
24 largely is going-- feeds up to superintendents
25 offices. And, you know, one of the accountabilities

2 for superintendents, is-- and one of the most
3 important ones is family satisfaction. So, you know,
4 we are looking at additional ways, and we'd love to
5 work with you and the Committee on what are ways to
6 get the feedback if, for example, parents who speak
7 languages other than English, are not getting the
8 information easily, don't know where to go to get the
9 information, that's something we should know
10 centrally. But probably more importantly,
11 superintendents need that information so they can
12 figure out how to deploy the resources they have more
13 effectively to the communities that are involved.
14 So-- but most of those decisions about how to deploy
15 the counselors are going to be made at the at the
16 school level and then at the superintendent level.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, wonderful. Thank you.

18 In what ways does DOE assist non-English-speaking
19 families with admissions processes? What does DOE
20 provide information in paper form as well as online
21 ease of access? At what school level, who's in
22 charge of doing outreach proactively? Is there a
23 number parents can receive support in their
24 languages? Is there a number they can call? What
25 efforts have been made to recruit more bilingual

2 staff to assist non-English-speaking families with
3 the admissions process?

4 MS. KLEINHANDLER: Non-English-speaking families--
5 - non-English-speaking families can always work with
6 our call center or our Family Welcome Centers to get
7 assistance to submitting their applications or
8 learning about the process. We also rely on school
9 staff, as I said before, who know their children
10 best, to support them on the admissions processes.
11 Our call center and Family Welcome Centers provide
12 interpretation in over 100 languages. We also have
13 bilingual staff at our Family Welcome Centers as
14 well. And we do have the call center phone number
15 and our Family Welcome Center phone numbers on our
16 website, so they are accessible-- those numbers are
17 accessible.

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: One other very
19 important resource-- resource, Chair Joseph, as you
20 know well, is our parent coordinators, who very often
21 are bilingual, trilingual, and it's such an important
22 channel of communication for all of our parents, but
23 particularly our parents for whom English may not be
24 a first language. So we rely on them. We train them
25 as well.

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

3 I'd like to recognize Councilmember Restler.

4 Thank you for joining us.

5 What option does parents or guardians who cannot
6 read, lack access to a computer, or is not familiar
7 with technology have to submit that student's
8 application? How are these options made available
9 and/or communicated? Who can parents reach out to in
10 schools if they have questions on these issues? And
11 who can they reach out if a contact is not available
12 to provide the needed support?

13 MS. KLEINHANDLER: We understand that families
14 come with very different experiences and access to
15 information and technology. In addition to
16 MySchools, families can apply via phone or in person
17 at a Family Welcome Center, as I said, and we work
18 with the-- with advocacy groups and schools to spread
19 the word about our information sessions. We know
20 that many of our families rely on their phones for
21 internet access, so we worked on making our digital
22 platforms completely mobile friendly.

23 Our agency partners with CBO partners who are
24 aware of the information about Family Welcome

2 Centers, and they tend to send families there, should
3 they have any enrollment needs.

4 We publish an admissions guide that provides
5 information on every process in multiple languages,
6 and these guides have information about how to reach
7 us, and families with children already enrolled in
8 schools can also submit via their school counselors
9 or other school staff.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I have a major concern
11 regarding admissions and the impact of student
12 diversity in our schools, as New York City is cited
13 as having one of the most segregated school systems
14 in the nation.

15 Research-- research shows that diverse schools
16 provide benefits to all students including academic,
17 cognitive, social, emotional, civic and economic
18 benefits. It is because of such benefits that in
19 recent years DOE established a diversity plan as well
20 as a Diversity in Admissions Program? How many
21 schools are currently participating in the Diversity-
22 - Diversity in Admissions Program? How many were
23 added for the admission cycle this year? Did DOE
24 host any informational session regarding diversity
25 and admissions this admission cycle for school

2 leaders or interested schools? What effort if any,
3 is DOE making to promote and expand participation in
4 the Diversity in Admissions Program? And has DOE
5 tracked any data on the impact of the Diversity in
6 Admissions Program on diverse-- on school diversity?

7 MS. KLEINHANDLER: So currently, we have about a
8 hundred or so schools implementing a Diversity in
9 Admissions Program. Broken down we have about 26 in
10 3-K, 50 in pre-K, 57 in kindergarten, 52 in middle
11 school, and 43 in high school.

12 We work with superintendents and school
13 communities, principals, to hear if they want to
14 implement this. We have the information on our
15 website. We are routinely in touch with
16 superintendents and principals over a whole host of
17 things. So we remind them that when each admission
18 cycle comes up, if you'd like to do a diversity in
19 admissions, please talk with your school leadership
20 team, please talk with your community, please talk
21 with your superintendent, and let us know. Those
22 again come to us from school communities. It's
23 driven by the school community. We-- the rest of
24 your question, you were asking if we if we track-- if
25 we track--

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Do you track any data on the
3 impact? So now it's data.

4 MS. KLEINHANDLER: Yes. And each year we-- we
5 report publicly on the Diversity in Admissions
6 outcomes, and all, or nearly all, of our schools
7 reach their admissions targets each year. You did
8 ask how many are new to the process this year? I
9 don't have that information here today. But I can
10 get back to you with that number.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Dan, you wanted to say
12 something?

13 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Thank you Chair.
14 The-- the results of the Diversity in Admissions
15 Program are very promising. And so we certainly-- I
16 know Chancellor Banks and I are interested in
17 figuring out and working with you and the Committee
18 on-- on how to promote it, encourage it. You know,
19 we don't want to do a blanket mandate or anything of
20 that nature. We want to make sure that communities
21 are involved, and that people understand the value of
22 it. But it is very promising. It's a-- for New York
23 City. It's a fairly small sample, I think about a
24 hundred schools and programs that have these-- these
25 goals. But it's a pretty big sample. And again, the

2 results are quite encouraging, both from the -- as
3 Sarah says -- that the fact that for the most part,
4 they hit their goals. They hit the diversity goals,
5 just being intentional about their admissions
6 process. And they are hitting these goals all over
7 the city in different places and at different levels.
8 And so we are definitely interested in figuring out
9 how to expand those practices as quickly as we can,
10 while making sure that it doesn't-- it never becomes
11 just kind of a compliance exercise or a box-checking
12 exercise. It's something that people really
13 understand the power and value of it

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Absolutely. It has to be
15 meaningful. I'm going to allow my Councilmember--
16 Councilmember Sanchez?

17 COUNSEL: Before we move on to questions from
18 other committee members: Just a reminder for all
19 those committee members who are virtual, if you could
20 please use the raise hand feature if you have any
21 questions. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Oh. Councilmember Ung.

23 COUNCILMEMBER UNG: Thank you, and thank you for
24 your testimony today. I actually have a few
25 questions about the mission changes. Does DOE have a

2 plan and timeline for engaging the community on the
3 feedback regarding admission changes?

4 MS. KLEINHANDLER: Moving forward?

5 COUNCILMEMBER UNG: Yes. Moving forward.

6 MS. KLEINHANDLER: Yes. So that-- we-- that is
7 our plan. We are working on-- on a plan with our
8 Family Engagement arm. We want that-- we want that
9 to be part of our process, a habit if you will, of my
10 office to continually engage. When Chancellor Banks
11 came on board, this was his vision and we are-- my
12 office and I are realizing that vision, and we would
13 like that to be a habit, a part of our work. So yes.

14 Great. So maybe we should just stick concretely
15 to this year then. Is there a timeline for this
16 year, for the upcoming school year, next year?

17 MS. KLEINHANDLER: Not yet.

18 COUNCILMEMBER UNG: Okay.

19 MS. KLEINHANDLER: But as soon as we have it,
20 we'll share it with the Council.

21 COUNCILMEMBER UNG: Great. So, again, in these
22 engagements, regarding the feedback: Are the same
23 groups that you mentioned here the same groups that
24 you reach out to in this-- I'm sorry, in this chart?
25 Are they the same? Obviously, I'm thinking about the

2 plan. Like, is it the same groups? And it you know,
3 do you also listen for to the CECs?

4 MS. KLEINHANDLER: So yes, we listen to the CECs,
5 yes, it will be the same groups. And we would love
6 to hear if there are other groups that we should be
7 engaging as well. So this is not a finite list of--
8 of groups, we definitely can expand. And yes, we
9 have relationships with our CECs, and we engage them
10 as well.

11 COUNCILMEMBER UNG: So I'm going to narrow this a
12 little bit more. Is there a timeline this year? You
13 know, is it the next month, the next coming months,
14 does this give it preparation to everybody involved?

15 MS. KLEINHANDLER: I would say in the next couple
16 of months, we will have a plan ironed out.

17 COUNCILMEMBER UNG: Excellent. And I know this
18 will require communications and feedback. Is there
19 thoughts about using statewide tests? Is there
20 thoughts about using that as a part of the admissions
21 process again?

22 MS. KLEINHANDLER: I think everything is on the
23 table for discussion. And we'd like to hear multiple
24 perspectives about what would make sense for families

2 and communities. So I think that is definitely
3 something that we would listen to. Yes.

4 COUNCILMEMBER UNG: Great. Thank you. And I
5 just have a quick question about G&T. G&T has been
6 very popular, the expansion of G&T. I will say for
7 my district, I'm not going to say that for all the
8 districts. Is there also plans and thoughts about
9 expanding the G&T program?

10 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yes, certainly. And
11 that's-- that's driven by demand. And so, you know,
12 we'll be able to, I think, fairly soon release the
13 figures of how many applications we got for
14 kindergarten G&T this year. But it was substantial.
15 It's, you know, many thousands of families looking
16 for these spots. And so we have to look at that, and
17 we have to look at it locally. Again, I'm going to
18 keep coming back to, but this is the-- the emphasis
19 we have in our structure, the superintendents. A big
20 part of their job is putting their ears to the ground
21 and understanding what the demand is.

22 So, I would-- let me-- let me say this, I would
23 not be surprised if what comes up from the ground
24 level is a demand for-- for more Gifted and Talented

2 seats in particular places. And, you know, we'll
3 certainly be responsive to that. Absolutely.

4 COUNCILMEMBER UNG: Great. And just one last
5 question following up with the G&T. Back to the
6 missions of G&T. Is there thoughts about, again,
7 what are the criterias to the missions, the G&T
8 program that would be a little different than this
9 year?

10 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: I mean, that's--
11 that's again something we're looking at very closely
12 and listening, you know. There-- obviously, there
13 used to be a test for-- for kindergarten G&T. Right
14 now we're doing an assessment that the teachers are
15 administering and-- not a test. There's some issues
16 in the-- in the research around using a test, is that
17 really an accurate measure for kindergarten
18 admissions. But this is something that people are
19 looking at all over the country. So we're going to--
20 we're going to continue to-- to look at the data,
21 look at the research, talk to people obviously, on
22 the ground. We want to-- we want to provide access
23 to those students who are interested, families who
24 are interested and will benefit from accelerated
25 learning. We want to accommodate every single one of

2 those-- those children, we have to figure out the
3 best way to make sure that-- that a child and a
4 student is going to be successful with accelerated
5 learning. And so will keep will keep those options
6 on the table.

7 COUNCILMEMBER UNG: Thank you. And I look
8 forward to, I'm sure, speaking with all of you in the
9 future.

10 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Thank you, Council--
11 Councilmember.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Councilmember.
13 Councilmember Vernikov?

14 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: Thank you, Chair Joseph.
15 How much public input for middle schools was
16 received after the September announcement, if you can
17 comment on that?

18 MS. KLEINHANDLER: How much-- I'm sorry, how
19 much public input was received...

20 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: On the middle school
21 admission?

22 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Middle school
23 screens, Councilmember?

24 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: Yes.

2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: I mean, we didn't
3 try to quantify it, you know, collectively, but it
4 was a lot. It was a big effort. It looked different
5 in different districts. Some superintendents, as I'm
6 sure you know, did a number of town halls, some
7 engaged heavily with CECs. Some went to PTA by PTA
8 and got input that way. So collectively, I think it
9 was a massive amount of input. Could it have been
10 more? Of course, you never-- never have enough --
11 never hear from enough people. But in general, I
12 think our superintendents did a really nice job of
13 reaching out to the communities and getting input.

14 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: Thank you. And can you
15 just comment a little bit about what criteria does
16 the DOE use in screening for competitive middle
17 schools and high schools. It does use grades
18 attendance, thank you.

19 MS. KLEINHANDLER: For both middle and high
20 school, we use course grades, the four course grades,
21 English, history, math, and science.

22 So for middle school, we look at fourth grade
23 core course grades. And for high school, we look at
24 seventh grade core course grades. There are a couple
25 of middle schools that use auditions for admissions.

1 COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

49

2 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: That use what? I'm
3 sorry.

4 MS. KLEINHANDLER: Auditions for admissions.

5 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: Auditions. So just
6 grades and auditions?

7 MS. KLEINHANDLER: Grades and auditions. We have
8 a we have a set of high schools that use-- in
9 addition to grades, they use a portfolio of
10 assessments as well. It could be an essay submission
11 or a video submission.

12 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: Okay, thank you. And
13 under the lottery-based admission system, let's say a
14 student has a grade point average of 97. Could that
15 student technically be left out of a seat? Is that
16 accurate?

17 MS. KLEINHANDLER: That is accurate. Yes.

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: And just to clarify,
19 to make sure we're being clear, for a particular
20 school, yes. Is that student with a 97 average going
21 to receive an offer? Absolutely. But it may not be
22 to a particular school, if it's a very high-demand
23 school.

24 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: Understood. Thank you.

25

2 And can you comment a little bit about, you know-
3 - the DOE has a total budget of \$38 billion for the
4 22-23 school year, and New York City provides just a
5 little bit of half of that. So considering how
6 significant the contribution from New York taxpayers
7 is, is there some kind of an official representative
8 body to hear the concerns and oversight from parents
9 and taxpayers regarding admissions and other matters?

10 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: I wouldn't say
11 Councilmember there's a body particularly focused on
12 high school and middle school admissions. But, you
13 know, I would assert that that sort of responsiveness
14 and accountability runs from the mayor, of course,
15 who is held accountable by the by the voters, down
16 through his appointees, Chancellor Banks, the
17 superintendents at the local level, the CECs I think,
18 do a-- do a good job of asking those questions about
19 budget and where the money is being spent. Probably
20 we could get into a longer explanation of the process
21 that already exists at the school level to approve
22 budgets, and then at the district level, as well. So
23 there's-- there's a fair amount of communication --
24 I'm not saying couldn't be better -- about where the
25 money is spent, and there are mechanisms for input

2 from New Yorkers from-- from all over the city on it
3 at different levels.

4 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: Thank you. Can we get
5 assurances from you that the state standardized test
6 will be used by screening programs?

7 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: I'm sorry,
8 Councilmember, I didn't hear the first part of the
9 question. Can you-- could you just repeat that?

10 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: Sure. Can we get
11 assurances from you that the state standardized tests
12 will be used by screening programs?

13 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: As Sarah mentioned,
14 that's that is something that is on the table, that
15 we're looking at. We-- again, we want to make sure
16 that our admissions processes and our screening
17 processes, where they exist, are fair. And so, you
18 know tests used to be a part of the equation. It's
19 possible that at some point they become part of the
20 equation. We do think that the current screening
21 system that identifies students who are excelling
22 based on their grades is a good one. But you know,
23 we certainly wouldn't take anything off the table.

24 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: Okay. We look forward
25 to working with you. Thank you.

2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Thank you very much.

3 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Councilmember.

4 Councilmember Dinowitz?

5 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: Thank you, Chair.

6 Deputy Chancellor, I love what you said in the
7 beginning about our kids, that brilliance is
8 everywhere. And I-- I love that you said that
9 because I believe that too. But, you know, one of
10 the things that I've seen since I was in middle
11 school where they started, you know, getting rid of
12 honors programs and self-contained classes, is there
13 seems to be this sort of, I don't know policy, in the
14 Department of Education that every child is the same,
15 and we see it hurting our kids, where, you know, I've
16 taught in schools that don't offer self-contained
17 classes for students who need them. And we're not
18 offering a wide variety of things like AP classes, or
19 even honors programs. I would say part of this is
20 the breakup of our high school. But I have a few
21 questions.

22 Is there any effort in the Department of
23 Education to allow schools to provide more -- I'm
24 going to put them in quotation marks, "screens", and
25 I'll give you an example: You know, one of the great

2 promises of these small schools and high schools that
3 we were given was, students can explore their-- their
4 interests, they can go to a school that really speaks
5 to them. But what ends up happening, we you know,
6 there's a School of Finance, there's a School of
7 Theater, there's a School of Painting, there's a
8 school of TV Repair, whatever it is. And there's not
9 even a question on the application of, "Do you like
10 this? Is this something that interests you?" And
11 all of these theme schools become just another
12 department of education school, without speaking to
13 that brilliance, and the interests, and the diversity
14 that exists within-- within our city?

15 So is there any effort or ability for an
16 individual school to say, you know, we just want to
17 be able to know if a kid's interested in this without
18 being-- so they are getting an experience that's
19 beneficial to them, and our teachers can actually
20 create curriculum centered on the theme of the
21 school.

22 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Thank you so much,
23 Councilmember. And these are great points. I'm
24 probably not going to do it justice here, but
25 obviously, we will-- we will continue to work with

2 you on these issues. On the issue of themed schools,
3 I want to say, you know, some of them do exactly what
4 you are laying out as the ideal, you know, an
5 Aviation High School does, I think, a pretty good job
6 of making sure that the incoming students understand
7 what the focus is, and they, they have a terrific,
8 very deep program where kids are learning at a very
9 high level. You are also correct that some of the
10 schools, and some of the small high schools that were
11 opened on a on a particular theme hasn't been as
12 successful. And the kids sometimes are there and
13 don't necessarily do things, they don't necessarily
14 have a deep interest in whatever the theme is, and
15 the theme may not be really explored in a deep way.
16 And so the there's not-- there's not a great
17 alignment there.

18 I would just maybe as a placeholder for further
19 discussion, the pathways strategy that you've
20 probably heard about, we've discussed, is, in part an
21 improvement on that. And what I mean is: Think
22 about a-- particularly for high schools, but this is
23 also true, ultimately, for middle school, you go to,
24 you know, a small school, on the Morris Campus in the
25 Bronx, and you have an opportunity to engage-- you

2 may not know in ninth grade, as a rising ninth
3 grader, what it is you want to pursue in high school,
4 much less in your career, but you have choices, that
5 are high-quality choices for healthcare careers, for
6 tech careers, for business careers, for education
7 careers, and you-- you have, you can go deep in each
8 of those at a particular school. That's more where
9 we're heading, but other than a single theme--

10 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: Alright, but I-- sorry.

11 So I want to pause--

12 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yeah, please.

13 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: I want to pause there,
14 because I hear you. I'm running out of time. I want
15 to respect the time. But I would just say that I
16 highly encourage you to look at your transfer
17 protocols, because it is near impossible for a high
18 school kid to transfer schools from one to another.

19 If their interests change, or their academics
20 change, so you know, if they do meet the criteria for
21 making academic standards for another school, they
22 can't transfer. I'm sure you know the easiest and
23 best way to transfer schools when you're in high
24 school. Do you know it? You know, it's-- it's--
25 it's get beat up. That is the easiest way to get a

2 transfer. It's called a safety transfer. And that
3 is-- and I think-- I don't think that's a great
4 policy for the DOE to have. And so when we talk
5 about choice, and options and the brilliance of our
6 students, I think the DOE policy for allowing the
7 flexibility to reflect that.

8 And I do want to point out one thing about--
9 about G&T, and this is my last point, is that I
10 didn't really hear that there is a -- from
11 Councilmember Ung's question -- that there is a plan
12 for how we're assessing young students, very young
13 students in the G&T program. And I would-- I would
14 point out that I think a single exam for four-year-
15 olds is obviously not the best approach. But the
16 current approach of, of recommendations has not-- in
17 at least one city wide honors program -- has not
18 resulted in more diversity, but has simply resulted
19 in a lowering of standards. And that's and that's
20 measurable, and I'm happy to talk to you in more
21 detail about that after this hearing. But-- but we
22 deserve, you know, better, more-- better assessments
23 for our students that really do reflect the
24 population in which they should be learning with one

2 in the interests and ability of the population.

3 Thank you. Thank you Chair.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you Councilmember
5 Dinowitz.

6 I'm calling on Councilmember Sanchez.

7 And I also like to recognize Councilmember
8 Krishnan and Councilmember Gennaro.

9 COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you. Thank you so
10 much Chair. We're lucky to have you. And thank you
11 members of the administration for testifying. So my
12 question is going to focus on the important the
13 importance of Councilmember Joseph's Intro 338, which
14 I am a proud co sponsor of, which would establish a
15 Bullying Prevention Task Force.

16 According to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey from
17 the CDC about New York City, between 2009 and 2019,
18 bullying and E bullying were two times more likely
19 among LGB students than heterosexual students, 32% of
20 LGBTQ+ youth that were bullied in New York City
21 schools reporting attempting suicide in the previous
22 year, and that number is 40% for transgender youth.
23 Black LGB participants were the only group for which
24 suicidal ideation is actually increasing over time.
25 That's at an increasing rate. This is unacceptable.

2 And so for all students, we know that bullying is
3 unfortunately associated with suicidal ideation and
4 attempt. And that is, you know, the-- one of the
5 strongest reasons that I am supporting Intro 338.
6 And there are policies that the DOE could have in
7 place and yet does not. For one, the DOE has only
8 one LGBTQ liaison who's responsible for 1 million
9 students, and for reviewing complaint data across
10 educators, administrators, and students. There's
11 been turnover in this role, you're-- as far as I
12 understand, you're on the third liaison and just a
13 handful of years, because you have it as an
14 impossible job.

15 So one, we need to increase the number of folks
16 who are working as LGBTQ liaisons. Our schools have
17 very few Gender Sexuality Alliances, one of the most
18 proven school based intervention.

19 Three, there's no comprehensive health education
20 that is inclusive of LGBTQ plus in the curriculum.

21 Four, nearly 90% of teachers and administrators
22 are not being trained on gender, sexuality,
23 diversity. And this is-- this is all-- this is all
24 just completely unacceptable. Out for Safe Schools,
25

2 which is an intervention that is practiced in several
3 schools is an untested one.

4 And so all of this is to say that this this
5 taskforce is an important place for, for the
6 Department of Education to give full access to the
7 group of educators, mental health professionals, and
8 others who-- who become a part of the task force.
9 The DOE should be giving full access to rich
10 information so that there can be-- there can be
11 evaluations of policies and practices that can save
12 student lives. So the question with all of that is:
13 Are you in support of Israel 338, and you commit to a
14 robust implementation and participation in the task
15 force?

16 MR. REID: Good afternoon, and thank you so much
17 for that question. My name is Kenyatte Reid. I'm
18 Executive Director of the Office of Safety and Youth
19 Development.

20 We are in full support of the spirit of the
21 proposed legislation to prioritize the safety, the
22 emotional, psychological, and physical safety of our
23 children to rally multiple agencies, and also-- and
24 especially the inclusion of parent and children voice
25 in this process. I'd like to extend just my personal

2 time to offer an opportunity to meet with this
3 committee to really share the work that we have been
4 doing already, and talk about ways in which this bill
5 can support this work. We've had practices such as
6 SEL instruction, restorative community building. We
7 have an online bullying portal, we have policies that
8 have been updated as far as respect for all and
9 Chancellor's regulation. We have existing local
10 laws, as you know -- 51 and 45, and 231 -- all of
11 which that we report material incidents, we talk
12 about GSAs and the growth of that work, and support
13 for LGBTQ students. I firmly believe a deeper
14 conversation would allow us to co-create this
15 approach that continues to prioritize our children.
16 Just to quickly talk about some of the things,
17 because I completely agree. As far as number one,
18 the workload of our LGBTQ manager: I'm very pleased
19 that we did hire an LGBTQ coordinator. So now we
20 have doubled the size from one to two. You talked
21 about our GSAs. We are very proud that we are having
22 our first in-person GSA summit since lock down. That
23 is actually coming up on Monday, we have over 1500
24 young people on their day off -- because that is not
25 a high school instructional day -- that will be

2 attending. So that's going to be Monday coming up.

3 We have a full day of events for them. We're also

4 expanding the number of GSEs that we are supporting.

5 We are using some restorative justice money to expand

6 that number from 180, to now well over 300 GSAs.

7 [BELL RINGS]

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

9 MR. REID: Because I'm in complete agreement with
10 the power of GSAs as an affinity group for young
11 people. So those are just a few of the things to
12 touch on the questions that you have. But I really,
13 really just want to offer an opportunity to sit down
14 with the Committee to not only share some of the
15 details, but also co-create a really robust plan so
16 we can support our children. Thank you.

17 COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you Chair. May I
18 have just one more minute.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: One more.

20 COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: One more. Good to hear
21 about the GSA Summit. Please let us know when and
22 where. Only 29% of schools have a GSA right now. So
23 good to hear about your expansion efforts. I'm going
24 to be monitoring that.

2 And then just a follow up question that doesn't
3 have to be answered now, but for the Chief Enrollment
4 Officer, you said that approximately 60 schools down
5 from 159 have still opted to screen students. I
6 would-- I would love for this council to have that
7 information. Because I'm almost willing to bet that
8 the schools that-- or the districts that continue to
9 screen are the ones who are probably associated with
10 historic exclusionary practices. So we'd love to
11 have that information so that we can continue this
12 conversation about fairness and integration. Thank
13 you, Chair.

14 MS. KLEINHANDLER: Yeah. We can provide you with
15 that information.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Councilmember.
17 So does the DOE fully support the idea of a Bullying
18 Prevention Task Force? If not why?

19 MR. REID: Yes. As stated, we-- we definitely
20 support the entire spirit of this legislation and
21 want to meet with you more, and talk about the work
22 that we're doing. We want to discuss the gaps within
23 that work as-- as mentioned by your colleague, and
24 then really make sure that we are not replicating
25 anything, we are not replicating things as reports

2 and local laws. And then this way we can put
3 together a comprehensive partnership to ensure that
4 we support every child.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: This council funded-- Thank
6 you. This council funded and LGBTQ curriculum, half
7 a million dollars. How is that looking? And how's
8 it going? And how's that rollout?

9 MR. REID: So that rollout has gone extremely
10 well. Last year, we, through this partnership,
11 invested in over \$800,000 of digital libraries for
12 all of our schools to have access to. We're
13 continuing that work with our Office of Teaching and
14 Learning. Predominantly, our-- my office with our
15 LGBT coordinator and manager, we review the text and
16 then give those offerings to teaching and learning.
17 And that's the way in which that partnership works.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And as Councilmember Sanchez
19 mentioned, that staff-- that office has two people
20 for almost a million students. How does that work?
21 That's a lot of work on two people. Maybe you need
22 to staff up in that office.

23 MR. REID: We do agree with that. We also have
24 students service managers that work in every
25 superintendent's office. They are our direct access

2 to schools, as far as support, but the team is
3 brilliant. I must say we have a brilliant team.
4 Kalima and Jude are amazing.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Councilmember
6 Lee? You're up.

7 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Hi. Thank you so much. So I
8 guess I'll-- I have questions for different levels of
9 the schools. And so I just wanted to, I guess, start
10 with the lower grade levels with the G&T. Because I
11 remember-- I think I'd asked this in a previous
12 hearing. But for G&T, I remember I'd asked folks,
13 you know, what is the additional costs, right?, for
14 adding G&T programs. And I hear what you're saying,
15 First Deputy Chancellor, in terms of, you know, the
16 demand. But I guess my question is: Why are we
17 waiting for the demand? Because I actually firmly
18 believe that all schools, you know, have talented
19 students. Call it something else-- call it something
20 else other than G&T. But I think that each school
21 has a lot of talented students. And I guess my
22 question is, why are we not meeting their levels?
23 And then my other question related to G&T is: Has
24 there been any efforts to reevaluate, because I
25 understand what some of the other sentiments are. I

2 don't mind being transparent about this: My four
3 year old-- He's now eight. When he was four, he
4 didn't get in. I didn't realize that there were like
5 prep courses for some of these G&T classes, right?
6 But also at the same time, I think we have to look at
7 the person as a person, and not every student is
8 going to test in at age four. And not every student
9 is going to remain at that level to stay in it for
10 all those years in elementary school. So I guess my
11 question is, you know, how are you looking at the
12 reevaluation of those students? And I feel like
13 what's happening is that-- and I agree with what
14 Councilmember Dinowitz was saying, I feel like we
15 should all be moving-- trying to move people's
16 trajectory upward. But I think what's happening, at
17 least from what I've seen from the last
18 administration as well, is that there's almost like
19 this like, like, we're pushing people towards the
20 middle versus striving people upwards, and I'm not
21 understanding why. Oh, that was my first question.
22 Sorry.

23 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: So the I don't have
24 the-- Councilmember, thank you for that. I don't
25 have the cost numbers, but certainly we can get that

2 to you. You know, there is-- if you're going to do
3 a-- any sort of accelerated program, as you say,
4 whether you call it G&T or something else, it was
5 going to be meaningful, and not just a sorting
6 mechanism, which is not what probably any of us are
7 interested in, then it requires curriculum. It
8 requires teacher development work and principal
9 development work. We are doing that. And so part
10 of-- I hear your frustration, I'm sure you hear from
11 some of the folks in your community saying, "Gosh,
12 why aren't there more spots right away?" In part,
13 because we want to make sure that we're not just
14 opening something up and putting a label on it and,
15 and misleading parents, frankly, about what their
16 child is going to get in the school. We want to make
17 sure people are trained, there's curriculum, there's
18 support, there's expertise at different levels. And
19 so I think we made a pretty good downpayment on that
20 demand. And we're going to continue to look at--
21 look at that as we go forward. But we're going to
22 make sure it's meaningful. That's-- that's really,
23 really important. So and then your point is, I think
24 an excellent one, on you know, students at different
25 age groups have different needs. And you know, that

2 it may be that you have a student who really is going
3 to benefit from an accelerated program in elementary
4 school, but not so much in middle school and-- or in
5 high school, they may be going in a different
6 direction. And, you know, accelerated academics may
7 not be the right program for them. So-- so we have
8 to do more. I will say that's a-- that's a
9 underdeveloped area for us, but something we're
10 really interested in to allow those on ramps and off
11 ramps during the course of a child's career.

12 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Right. Okay. And then just
13 in terms of-- I was wondering if I could get
14 clarification when it comes to the middle school
15 screening admissions policies. Because in your
16 testimony, I know you're saying-- and I'll just read
17 it: "As a result of their thoughtful engagement.
18 You know, each district has tailored admissions
19 processes that has brought the overall number of
20 schools with academic screens down to 59 from 186.
21 Prior to the pandemic, this robust process ensured
22 that decisions about middle school screens reflected
23 local needs, and were communicated to families in
24 advance." So I guess my question is-- is that, um,
25 I-- I don't know, I'm just I'll just be upfront.

2 Like, I feel like this word screening sort of has
3 like a dirty connotation or negative connotation. So
4 I guess my question is, though, I just wanted
5 clarification, because it may not be screenings in
6 the traditional sense, but each school which I agree,
7 like, I think it should be tailored because no school
8 or community-- or council district is going to be the
9 same, right? And so I guess my question is that even
10 though they technically weren't screenings, each
11 school came up with their own set of criteria, is
12 that correct, in terms of how they were going to
13 accept students? I mean, there must have been some--
14 some criteria, no?

15 MS. KLEINHANDLER: So if-- if after engagement,
16 the district and the superintendent decided that some
17 of the middle schools were going to be screened, the
18 screening is universal across Middle Schools, with
19 the exception of the audition schools, we have some
20 audition middle schools, so it's using the core
21 course grades--

22 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Right. So if they weren't
23 using--

24 MS. KLEINHANDLER: and then the other schools are
25 open admissions, just a pure lottery.

2 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Right. So-- okay. So if
3 they're not using the screening, they're using some
4 other way of figuring it out right?

5 MS. KLEINHANDLER: They're-- it's a-- it's an
6 open lottery for the rest of the-- for the other
7 schools. There's no-- there's no other way to get
8 in. So you either have a screened school in your
9 schools in your district and some are unscreened, and
10 then it's a lottery.

11 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay. I have more questions
12 after-- your answer, but I'll hold for a second. But
13 is it okay if I have one more question?

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: We're really tight, this
15 question. We're really tight on time.

16 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Because I understand that for
17 the purposes of the high schools, for example, the
18 removal of the geographic zonings and the lack of
19 seats in Queens, I guess I'm talking more about
20 queens in particular, because I had a lot of
21 constituents in our districts that-- that literally -
22 - and these are not specialized schools, by the way
23 that I'm talking about -- is that they put 12
24 schools on their list and they were not accepted into
25 any of the schools in their area, and I'm talking

2 about a pretty large geographic area. So-- so my
3 question is-- is-- I understand that we want to,
4 because I worked in the AAPI community for many, many
5 years, and I think, you know, we see lots of, you
6 know, conversations, and I'm all for-- because we
7 need to be more diverse. I understand that. But I
8 guess my question, though, is: I think there also
9 needs to be a balance, right? Because if we're-- if
10 parents have to send their schools all the way to
11 Manhattan, or halfway across the city, I don't think
12 that's necessarily doing a service for the students
13 as well, if they're spending more than-- and I'm
14 coming from a transit desert, so it takes at least an
15 hour to get anywhere even within queens. So, so I
16 guess my question is: How are we helping to, number
17 one, address that issue about the geographic
18 locations, but then also, what are we doing to
19 create, you know, just-- I think the focus should be
20 in general, how do we improve schools overall, so
21 that the under-resourced schools get the resources
22 that they need so that every single student in the
23 City actually has what they need to succeed, right?
24 I think that's the focus. It's like, no matter where

2 you are, like that should be the focus is how do we
3 get our students the best education possible. So...

4 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: I know the Chair
5 says we're tight on time, so I'll be brief. But I
6 couldn't agree more. Like the ultimate vision the
7 Chancellor talks about is really a neighborhood
8 school strategy, meaning not that there aren't
9 choices, maybe your child will decide, or you will
10 decide the child will travel because they're looking
11 for something very specific. But you should be able
12 to go to the school that's down the block, the school
13 that's in your neighborhood, there's maybe only a
14 couple of subway stops or a couple of bus stops away,
15 and know that your child is going to get a good solid
16 education. Right now, a lot of our parents aren't
17 feeling that. And hence, I sometimes think that the
18 metric you would hold us accountable-- accountable
19 for (I'm being half serious here) is that the commute
20 time for our kids-- if the commute time is going
21 down, that probably means our schools are getting
22 better. If the commute time is going up and our kids
23 are an hour and a half on the bus or the train, that
24 probably means that something is wrong. So I agree
25 with your sentiments 100 percent.

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Councilmember.
3 Councilmember Hanif?

4 COUNCILMEMBER HANIF: Thank you so much. I'd
5 like to take a moment to just applaud the work of the
6 D15 diversity plan. School District 15 overlaps
7 heavily with my district, Council District 39,
8 including Park Slope, Carroll Gardens, Cobble Hill
9 and other neighborhoods, and the work that D15 has
10 done to successfully racially integrate middle
11 schools -- while there's still more work to do and
12 improvements to be made -- can really serve as a
13 model citywide for how we can develop and implement a
14 community-led approach to dismantling our segregated
15 school system, and removing academic screens in the
16 admissions process has been critical, like absolutely
17 critical to this work in D15. And I want to state my
18 support publicly, that moving away from screens in
19 the DOE all the way from differentiating between
20 gifted and non-gifted preschoolers to the SHSAT,
21 which has severely limited diversity at our
22 specialized high schools.

23 So in the aim of understanding how this
24 administration is affirmatively furthering and

2 advancing racial integration, I'd like to ask some
3 questions.

4 So Local Law 225 of 2018 states that every school
5 district that does not have a diversity plan must
6 have a formed Diversity Working Group, working toward
7 recommendations by 2024. What has been the DOE's
8 progress so far in fulfilling its obligations under
9 this law, and how many districts have established
10 District Diversity Working Groups?

11 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Thank you,
12 Councilmember. I appreciate your sentiments on that
13 and I appreciate the-- the plug for District 15 and
14 the middle school plan there.

15 So we are going to get that information to you.
16 I know that a lot of the work that was being done in
17 furtherance of the law was interrupted by the
18 pandemic, because it made outreach very difficult.
19 So we're going to-- we're reengaging right now to
20 figure out where each district is in that process.
21 And we're obviously going to support them to make
22 sure that we are fully in compliance. The-- to your
23 larger question, or your-- your, your question, which
24 I think is a good one for all of us: you know, how
25 can District 15 in the middle school process serve as

2 a model? You know, again, we'd love to hear your
3 thoughts and thoughts of your colleagues about that.
4 That is very much I think, an example of a community-
5 driven process, where there's a lot of input and a
6 lot of engagement with some outside facilitators who
7 I believe were quite helpful. We would very much
8 like to have other districts and other communities
9 engaged in that sort of process. Some of them are.

10 COUNCILMEMBER HANIF: Sure.

11 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: But what's the way
12 to-- to have that happen in an organic way, not-- not
13 a top down way?

14 COUNCILMEMBER HANIF: Absolutely. But it would
15 require the DOE to have some infrastructure for sure,
16 and not just entirely leave it up to the communities.
17 So just to be clear, the District Diversity Working
18 Group Initiative was paused during the pandemic?

19 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yes. It was
20 interrupted during a pandemic. Yes. I don't want to
21 say for sure that there wasn't work that continued in
22 some districts. This is something that we're
23 checking on right now. But in general, it definitely
24 interrupted the work.

2 COUNCILMEMBER HANIF: And who would be checking,
3 or who should we be in touch with about that?

4 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: We will absolutely
5 figure out who the right point person is. We've got
6 right now multiple people looking at that.

7 COUNCILMEMBER HANIF: Got it. It's-- it is a
8 little disappointing to know that there's no clarity
9 on sort of, if it was actually interrupted and what's
10 going on. So I really look forward to learning more
11 about this.

12 The school Diversity Advisory Group put forward
13 over 60 adopted recommendations present on the DOE's
14 website meant to be guiding principles for creating
15 an inclusive and equitable system, several of which
16 are specific to enrollment. How is the DOE
17 continuing to track their progress on the adopted
18 recommendations? And can updates be made available
19 to the school and the public?

20 MS. KLEINHANDLER: We are tracking progress. We
21 are doing that through our-- through our feedback
22 sessions through our changes to our admissions to
23 make things easier for families and as application
24 processes. And we track and look at the application
25 numbers, we look to see where we can make

2 adjustments, and of course, we rely heavily on our
3 superintendents to help with their communities and
4 sort of have the-- have the kind of outreach and
5 community engagement to see where we can make more
6 progress.

7 COUNCILMEMBER HANIF: And then has the School
8 Diversity Advisory Group and meeting quarterly and
9 publishing annual reports as required by Local Law
10 224 of 2019.

11 MS. KLEINHANDLER: I have to get back to you on
12 that.

13 COUNCILMEMBER HANIF: And are you the point
14 person for this information?

15 MS. KLEINHANDLER: There are a few of us who are
16 the point people. So we will make sure that we get--
17 get back to you on all of that information about the
18 School Diversity Advisory Group.

19 COUNCILMEMBER HANIF: And then the timely release
20 of the annual school diversity accountability report
21 pursuant to Local Law 59 of 2015 is important to
22 continuing to understand school demographic trends as
23 well as the DOE's progress and encouraging diversity
24 in New York City Public Schools. When can we expect
25 this-- this year's report to come out? The law

2 requires the most updated report to be released by
3 November 1, 2022.

4 MS. KLEINHANDLER: It was submitted and we're
5 posting today.

6 COUNCILMEMBER HANIF: Wonderful, great timing.
7 Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Councilmember
9 Narcisse?

10 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: Good afternoon. What I
11 see is every child-- every child is gifted and
12 talented, if we give them the structure and we give
13 the support. And before I started, I want to tell
14 you, I'm a mother of four. All my kids benefited
15 from Gifted and Talented program and specialized high
16 school. But having said that, I want my district to
17 be Gifted and Talented. And I see if I'm listening
18 to all my colleagues, that's what we're getting at:
19 To say, all children should have the same
20 opportunity. And my thing is, what are you doing in
21 terms of helping, especially when it comes to tests,
22 to prep? It's a lot of money. So what is the
23 graduate-- graduation rate? And the college
24 acceptance rate for Gifted and Talented schools--
25 high schools, and how many ESL student are currently

2 enrolled in Gifted and Talented program? And what
3 are the chances for a three-year-old non-speaking--
4 non-English-speaking, get to this country be accepted
5 in a specialized high school? I'm going to stop on
6 there. Maybe you can answer some before I continue.

7 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Thank you so much,
8 Councilmember Narcisse. Those are those are great
9 questions. I don't I don't have the answer here.
10 But those are those are questions we can and will
11 answer, give you specific answers. I will say on the
12 last one, I'm not sure we-- we can do that analysis.
13 I think it's a great question. I would love to
14 research that. If you are a three-year-old coming to
15 this country, not speaking English, what are your
16 chances to get into a specialized high school or
17 Screening High School, we can certainly give you the
18 demographics of those specialized high schools. But
19 I would love to dig into that and get as close as we
20 can to answering all of your questions very
21 specifically.

22 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: So you can't answer
23 [inaudible]

24

25

2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: I don't-- I don't
3 have that data here and I don't-- I don't want to
4 give you anything that's at all inaccurate.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: But you will follow up--

6 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: Okay, so now if I say--

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Excuse me, Councilmember.

8 You fill follow up with that data for our committee.

9 Members, correct?

10 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yes, Chair.

11 Absolutely. We're taking all these down. I'm
12 looking at staff, and we will absolutely give you
13 written answers, and obviously, we're always happy,
14 Councilmember Narcisse, to jump on the phone if you
15 have followups.

16 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: Okay. And what are you
17 doing-- DOE is doing to change the narrative that
18 specialized high schools or gifted high schools are
19 the only one that can give you a chance to better
20 your life in New York City, while are we talking
21 about New York City.

22 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Oh, gosh, that is
23 such a great question. I don't know, Councilmember
24 Narcisse, if you were able to be there or see the
25 announcement the Chancellor did about the high

2 school-- screening high schools. Because I think I
3 think Chair Joseph was there. He had with him when
4 he made the announcement about 20 principals of
5 screening schools that are not the ones that we all
6 hear about all the time that a wonderful schools,
7 that our schools serving, mostly black and
8 Latino/Latina students that don't get a lot of press,
9 they don't get a lot of attention. But these are
10 thriving, wonderful schools. And so that's just an
11 example of something the Chancellor is personally
12 committed to. He didn't just stand up there at the
13 lectern and, you know, say, "This is my thing." He's
14 like, have each of these principals talk about their
15 schools, because we have schools, that should be in
16 higher demand, but we're not doing a good job of
17 getting the word out for them. So this is-- this is
18 a whole body of work that we would love to talk to
19 you about.

20 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: And I'm with
21 Councilmember Lee as well about traveling because one
22 of my son had-- ended up in Bronx Science, and coming
23 from Canarsie in his transportation desert. So if I
24 had a good school in my community, I don't think I
25 would make my children-- they've been traveling since

2 they were five, because I'm looking at all parents--
3 every parent's dream is to have their kids to have
4 the best quality education. And I think we have that
5 responsibility toward New York City. In the budget,
6 we're talking about billion-- 30 billion dollars. So
7 we can do better for New York City. And I think we
8 have to spend our money wisely, to educate and to
9 have a better future for tomorrow. The inequities
10 that we're seeing-- the children that are having the
11 gun in New York City happen to have not having enough
12 structure. Because I can tell you, I'm a mom of
13 four. And I have been through it. I'm not speaking
14 from just out there. In contrast, I'm talking about
15 my history from a person coming from Haiti, as a high
16 school, and I could not get into specialized high
17 school, but my children, I make sure I work for it.
18 So let's do better for New York City and address the
19 inequities, especially starting with education.
20 Thank you.

21 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Thank you,
22 Councilmember.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Councilmember
24 Narcisse. I just have a quick follow up.
25 Councilmember Avilés, just give me two seconds.

2 According to the DOE, 40% of our students with
3 disabilities fall into group five in screening high
4 school programs, and only 3% to 5% fall into group
5 one. So what percentage of students with
6 disabilities receive first priority to screen high
7 school programs in 2022 and 2023? And what-- what
8 is DOE doing to ensure that students with
9 disabilities are not underrepresented at screened
10 high schools?

11 MS. KLEINHANDLER: So at all of our high schools,
12 there are special-- there are students with
13 disability seats reserved based on the borough
14 average. And the way that-- the way that admissions
15 works is that even if there's-- for example, as you
16 said, even if there is a smaller percentage of
17 students with disabilities who are in group one, the
18 minute that group-- the minute that those students
19 who are in group one are placed, we immediately go to
20 group two. Then once those students are placed, we
21 immediately go to group three. Students with
22 disabilities are in their own bucket competing
23 against other students with disabilities. They are
24 not competing for general education seats. They are

2 competing for students with disability seats in every
3 single one of our schools screened or not screened.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So what does that-- the
5 numbers look like in each of the boroughs?

6 MS. KLEINHANDLER: I can get back to you with
7 that information for sure and share it with the
8 Council.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: That would be very helpful.
10 Thank you. Councilmember Avilés?

11 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: Gracias. Good afternoon.
12 Thank you, Chair. So I continue to be deeply
13 dismayed at the use, and the return to practices that
14 perpetuate segregation in New York City Public
15 Schools, and the disparities that are clearly pointed
16 out in all of the data.

17 Now, I understand there are exceptions to the
18 rules. But it's important to note that screens have
19 a negative connotation because of the historical
20 realities and the purpose of these screens was to
21 discriminate, and it did achieve that. And we see
22 continuing use and perpetuation of that situation by
23 clear outcomes. There are still very much
24 disparities across the board.

2 I am sorry I missed your presentation, but I was-
3 - I had a curiosity around the middle school
4 admissions were it noted a significant decrease from
5 196 to 59. Is that simply academic screens? Or does
6 the 196 include all kinds of screens?

7 MS. KLEINHANDLER: Simply academic screens.

8 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: Simply academic screens.
9 Great. And do we know the total number of schools
10 that use additional other types of screens like
11 auditions? And...

12 MS. KLEINHANDLER: So at the high school level?
13 I think-- let me just make sure that I have the
14 information-- give you the right information. Okay,
15 so for the middle school, we have 40-- 40 schools to
16 do an audition. I'm sorry, 40 programs that do an
17 audition. We have 40 programs that have a language
18 criteria. We have 52 screened programs. And we have
19 21 that do a talent test.

20 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: So the 52 screened are
21 different from the 59 screened in the presentation.
22 Those mean different things?

23 MS. KLEINHANDLER: So the 52-- the 52 screens
24 programs are within the 59 schools, so yes.

2 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: Got it. Got it. Well, I
3 will continue to-- I think I come from District 15
4 and I have a little sliver of District 20. They have
5 very different views on this issue. District 15 most
6 certainly is not in favor of ongoing screens and
7 their impacts.

8 But I just want to say in terms of G&T, we've had
9 one classroom, that was put into a local school in my
10 district. It has 11 children in their class. Every
11 other class in that grade level has 28 children. Can
12 you explain to me how this is supposed to work for
13 children, given overcrowding in classrooms and our
14 clear knowledge that classroom size matters for
15 everyone, for students, for educators? How do we
16 explain this to parents?

17 MS. KLEINHANDLER: So the Gifted and Talented
18 process is filled based on demand and based on how
19 you-- if you if you are screened in, and if there is
20 a classroom that has that that few students, 11, it
21 is based on the demand in terms of--

22 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: So how do I explain to the
23 parent in the 28-- with the 28 students that their
24 child can't get access to a small classroom size?

2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: So if that's the
3 case, then the-- the principal presumably is going to
4 make changes for next year. If the demand isn't
5 there, we're not going to maintain classrooms where
6 there isn't sufficient demand. And those sorts of--
7 by the way, I would say that-- that variable class
8 size is something that you see more times than not in
9 schools for various reasons.

10 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: Okay, so in terms of-- is
11 the DOE considering any changes to enrollment
12 planning in order to make it easier for all schools
13 to comply with the new class size law?

14 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: So we-- we certainly
15 will be in compliance with the class size law as
16 written. We are-- have planning groups internally
17 that meet on a regular basis, really on a weekly
18 basis to make sure that we have a good plan for
19 compliance. We're meeting with our labor partners as
20 the-- as the law lays out. So we will be in
21 compliance as the-- as you know, there's a five-year
22 phase in and we're planning for that for that phase
23 in. At this point, we're not planning changes to
24 admissions policies in order in order to comply, but
25 there will-- there will need to be some significant

2 trade-offs and changes made as-- as we phase in that
3 law.

4 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: Is-- has the DOE taken any
5 actual steps. We hear in response to this, "We will.
6 We will. We will. We will." That time will go very
7 quickly. We want to know what is being put into
8 place right now. What actions are concretely being
9 taken right now?

10 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Right now we're
11 making sure that we that we are in compliance with
12 the first phase of the law, and we will be. The
13 future tense that I'm using is not because we think
14 we're not in compliance. It's just because of the
15 timing of the law. And so we're looking at year one,
16 year two, year three, et cetera. And year one is
17 next year essentially, and we will be in compliance
18 in year one.

19 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: Great. I'd love to hear
20 more specifically and concretely with a timeline on
21 exactly what DOE is doing to take concrete steps to
22 abide by the law. Thank you.

23 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Thank you,
24 Councilmember. We'd be happy to meet with you on
25 that.

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Councilmember.
3 I'd like to recognize Councilmember Stevens. And
4 Councilmember Restler, you're next.

5 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: Thank you so much,
6 Joseph. Greatly appreciate your leadership and
7 convening of this hearing. First Deputy Chancellor,
8 I believe you're a constituent, so I'll try to be
9 nice. Not too nice, but a little nicer than I might
10 otherwise be.

11 I just do want to state plainly a comment at the
12 front end that it's important for us to acknowledge
13 that the Department of Education has never
14 desegregated our schools. It never happened. And so
15 every policy decision we make has to contribute to
16 deepening integration and equity in our schools:
17 elimination of screens, elimination of G&T programs,
18 these should be our Northstars. So that we can
19 ensure that we have integrated classrooms in every
20 community and a far more equitable system than we
21 tragically do not have today and have never had.
22 That is not a failure on your all's part. But we're
23 not doing enough, not nearly enough, after many, many
24 decades of protracted segregation. I'm going to
25 focus my questions though today on the 3-K program,

2 as I am profoundly disturbed by this administration's
3 commitment to take \$1 billion away from 3-K over the
4 next three years. We were on a path to achieving
5 universal 3-K in the city of New York. And that
6 appears to be something that this mayor is-- it's
7 clear that this mayor is strongly opposed to-- to
8 that goal. So firstly, I had my Instagram posts
9 ready for 3-K applications, but I don't believe
10 they've gone live yet. What's going on? When are 3-
11 K applications going live?

12 MS. KLEINHANDLER: Today.

13 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: Okay.

14 MS. KLEINHANDLER: Applications opened today for
15 3-K and for pre-K.

16 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: So I mean, I don't know.
17 My staff told me they're not live. So it's happening
18 in hours? There's a glitch? Is there a problem?

19 MS. KLEINHANDLER: No, it's open.

20 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: It's open?

21 MS. KLEINHANDLER: Yes.

22 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: Okay. The links are
23 working as of now.

24 MS. KLEINHANDLER: [NODS HER HEAD YES.]

25

2 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: Okay, we'll check. Thank
3 you. Maybe we're just delayed.

4 I believe that we are experiencing a neglect of
5 the 3-K program by discontinuing meaningful outreach.
6 And as with any government program, we need to be
7 engaging diverse communities in multiple languages to
8 help them enroll, to help families enroll. How many
9 people are currently working on 3-K outreach?

10 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: So just-- Sarah can
11 give you the details on this. Thank you,
12 Councilmember. Good to see you. As always.

13 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: Let me know if there are
14 any issues in the district. Potholes or otherwise.

15 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: I certainly will.
16 If not, my wife will.

17 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: Okay. Good.

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: The so we've heard
19 the, you know, the comment or the questions about
20 outreach and 3-K. There's been really no diminution
21 whatsoever in outreach. We're continuing to do very
22 vigorous outreach.

23 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: Just to interrupt you on
24 that one. My understanding is that outreach declined
25 dramatically during COVID, during the latter part of

2 the de Blasio administration, and it's never come
3 back, and that no investment has been made. And we
4 had a robust, dynamic, really effective multilingual
5 outreach team that was creative organizers in the de
6 Blasio administration, and now it's gone. It's just
7 totally gone, and nothing is happening. And that is
8 why you all are taking a billion dollars away from 3-
9 K over the next three years.

10 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: So applications for
11 3-K went up significantly. And I think that's a
12 testament to the outreach [crosstalk]--

13 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: Are you going to
14 guarantee that every applicant for universal 3-K has
15 a seat next year?

16 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: No, because we have
17 a mis-allocation of seats all over the city where we
18 have a huge-- a huge surplus of seats in some places
19 and a deficit of seats and others, which was a
20 serious design flaw in the program. So we're having
21 to deal with the aftermath of--

22 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: Will you provide a
23 comprehensive breakdown to this committee of what
24 seats are available? Extended day? Partial day?
25 By-- by school district?

2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: I'm happy to do
3 that.

4 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: We have not received that
5 information to date, so we will eagerly anticipate
6 reviewing it.

7 My understanding is we have extended-day seats,
8 which are like the gold standard that every family is
9 dying to get into vacant all across the city because
10 we are not doing outreach. So I really want to come
11 back to the question of: What is the size of the 3-K
12 outreach team? And can you elaborate on your 3-K
13 outreach plan?

14 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Just to be clear,
15 there were thousands-- tens of thousands of empty
16 seats in this program before the pandemic, and there
17 continue to be. But Sarah, why don't-- why don't you
18 address the specific question?

19 MS. KLEINHANDLER: So the 3-K outreach team is
20 part of the Office of Student Enrollment. My entire
21 office does 3-K outreach among outreach for other--
22 all the other processes. We-- [BELL RINGS]-- can I
23 continue? We-- the-- the number is, I mean, we have
24 hundreds of people who work in the Office of Student
25 Enrollment across the city. And we all do 3-K

2 outreach. We send-- we send emails, we work with the
3 community based organizations--

4 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: I-- I would-- how about
5 this? I'll try and frame it more nicely. I'm very
6 concerned that the dynamic early childhood education,
7 outreach efforts of the previous administration have
8 been totally discontinued, and are not happening in
9 our communities, which are contributing to the
10 available seats that families desperately need. So
11 that is my hypothesis. What I want to offer, and I
12 imagine that many of my colleagues are on the table,
13 and some are much more dynamic than me -- many, maybe
14 all of them -- that we would like to be partners. So
15 bring us in. And if you're all saying that we have
16 empty seats that aren't being filled, I can tell you
17 that every member of the City Council would love to
18 connect our families to early childhood education.
19 So, would somebody from your team be willing to go
20 through with me at district 33, districts 13, 14, and
21 15 outreach plan for 3-K. And I'll put time, energy
22 and resources personally in to making sure that we
23 fill every one of those seats, and then some because
24 the demand is there. I talk to families every day in
25 my community who are saying they can't get into 3-K.

2 So there is a serious disconnect. And I don't-- and
3 I'd like to better understand what dedicated staff
4 are-- are actually working on this not everybody in
5 your office, because that's not a-- that's not
6 tangible. That's not--

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Councilmember...

8 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: I'll shut up. Thank you,
9 Chair Joseph. I appreciate the opportunity.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Councilmember Krishnan?

11 COUNCILMEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you so much Chair
12 Joseph. Councilmember Restler, no one is as dynamic
13 as you are, just to state for the record.

14 You know, I actually want to echo first -- and
15 thank you for your testimony today, and thank you
16 Chair for this very important hearing. I think
17 Councilmember Restler's point, I do want to echo it's
18 a concern shared by many of us throughout the
19 Council, in terms of this administration's retreat
20 from 3-K, which is a fundamental -- I mean, we all
21 know it's a foundational program, the data is very
22 clear how crucial it is, and the notion of scaling
23 back seats because of the lack of demand-- just-- it
24 can't be accurate, right? There's so many students
25 in need of 3-K. The real focus seems to be on the

2 need for more multilingual, aggressive outreach. But
3 to scale back a signature program raises major
4 concerns for us. So I know I've made this clear in
5 every education hearing we've had. I'll continue to
6 do so, but I did want to flag that point again.

7 There are a couple questions I have in
8 particular. One is around-- following up on
9 Councilmember Avilés questions about the class size
10 matters law. I'd still like to get a better sense of
11 what DOE's intentions specifically are to implement
12 this this mandate that we have now. I think it was
13 earlier on November 10 at a CPAC meeting, Ms.
14 Kleinhandler, you were there. And you spoke about
15 the need to consider the class size goals and the new
16 state law. But I think at the time, your response
17 was more about, you'll make sure that the law is
18 adhere to if and when it actually comes down. Now we
19 have that-- we have that law. It's the law of the of
20 the state. But many of our schools continue to be
21 very overcrowded and will obviously find it difficult
22 to meet these new class size caps. But the concern
23 is: Is DOE aware and committed to the class size
24 mandate, the legal mandate at this point? And what
25 is the intention to comply with it? What is the plan

2 to tailor enrollment policies to better-enable
3 schools to meet those new caps? I know there's some
4 sort of, you know, general sense that now this is the
5 law. But I would like to hear more specifically,
6 what are the steps that you all intend to take?

7 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Thank you. Thank
8 you very much, Councilmember Krishnan. Good to see
9 you. So the first of all, I guess let me start here
10 before we get into the-- the really important details
11 of implementation of this law. You know, the-- the
12 Chancellor, the Mayor, me (for whatever it's worth),
13 certainly would like to see lower class size, it's a-
14 - it's a win for everybody, if we can have lower
15 class size. It obviously comes with costs and
16 operational challenges. There's a few things you can
17 do to lower class size. You can hire more teachers
18 and open more classrooms, and that will happen in the
19 schools where there's space, you can build more
20 classrooms, where you don't have that additional
21 space that also was called for, as you know, in the
22 law, on-- on the capital side. You could also,
23 theoretically at least, limit the-- the incoming
24 classes, which certainly has a cost, maybe an
25 intangible but an important cost as well, if you have

2 more families trying to get into a particular place
3 or a particular school and can't do it.

4 So certainly on the hiring of teachers, opening
5 more classrooms, that-- that's going to happen.
6 That's part of-- part of what we are planning for,
7 just to give you more of a sense, because I get it
8 that I'm not being particularly clear. We're looking
9 through the data, almost classroom-by-classroom,
10 school-by-school: Where are the places, where the
11 classrooms that already meet the caps, because we do
12 have many classrooms that already meet the caps,
13 where are the ones that don't meet the caps, and
14 there is space to open additional classrooms. Okay.
15 So then the plan would be, we're going to have to
16 hire more teachers in that particular building and
17 open additional classrooms, how many? What is the
18 cost? What is the time that will have to be invested
19 in-- in hiring potentially thousands of additional
20 teachers? What are the what are the schools that
21 aren't meeting the caps are at least not in every
22 grade and subject, where they're overcrowded? And
23 there isn't-- there isn't additional space? Well,
24 that becomes a capital issue. So that's the sort of
25 planning that we're doing. And again, looking at the

2 full five-year phase in, what do we have to do to be
3 in compliance year one, year two, year three, and you
4 know, no mystery that it gets much more difficult,
5 and it's going to require some potentially very
6 painful trade-offs. As we get to, you know, year
7 two, year three, et cetera.

8 COUNCILMEMBER KRISHNAN: And thank you for the--
9 for the response. And Mr. Weisberg, just to
10 conclude, is it your testimony then, on behalf of DOE
11 today, that this administration is aware of the
12 class-size mandate and fully intends to comply with
13 that mandate?

14 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yes. Absolutely.
15 Yes.

16 COUNCILMEMBER KRISHNAN: And just a follow up
17 with two questions Chair, if that's okay. Very
18 brief. I promise. One is just, you know, I think
19 you touched on this a bit already. But you know, the
20 DOE data is pretty clear that about 347,000 students
21 that are crammed into overcrowded schools, while many
22 other schools are underutilized. Can you speak a bit
23 more to the plan to specifically address that fact?
24 It's a pretty sizable amount of students in
25 overcrowded schools.

2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yes. And Sarah may
3 want to jump in, or Nadiya, you may want to jump in
4 here as well, from the from the admission side. You
5 know, part of that, again, is capital and we do have
6 new-- or it's good that we have new schools coming
7 online in Queens and in other places, you know, new
8 high schools, and so that that will alleviate some of
9 that crowding.

10 The other thing that I know superintendents are
11 very focused on right now is, very often in districts
12 or in you know, high school-- including high school
13 districts, you have both. You have schools that are
14 over utilized, but you also have schools in the same
15 geographic area underutilized. And so part of the
16 answer is -- I think, Councilmember Narcisse was
17 talking about this -- make sure that, hey, those are
18 really good schools, the ones that are underutilized,
19 are providing great programming for kids. And then
20 we got to make sure families and kids know about
21 that. And so that's part of the answer is to
22 equalize-- is not to throw kids willy-nilly into
23 other schools, but to attract them to other schools
24 and programming, and that is something that
25 superintendents, with the help of our office, are

2 really, really engaged in very deeply right-- right
3 now. New pro-- so expect to see is this year, and
4 particularly next year, new programming that is
5 responsive to what the community is asking for in
6 schools that are underutilized. So that, again, we
7 attract more students to that, and at the same time,
8 alleviate overcrowding in some other schools.

9 COUNCILMEMBER KRISHNAN: And my final question
10 is-- because the time-- final, final question: Is
11 the-- the Educational Option Admissions Model was
12 developed many years ago to create high schools that
13 serve students of all academic performance levels.
14 How many Ed-Op programs are there currently, and why
15 hasn't this model been used more frequently in use in
16 recent years?

17 MS. KLEINHANDLER: I just need one second.

18 Sorry. Just give me one second.

19 To date, we have 398 Ed-Op programs across the
20 city. Ed-Op priorities-- prioritizes diverse
21 learners from random from a random selection. So
22 it's about a third of seats to-- are prioritized for
23 high performers, a third for mid performers, and a
24 third for lower performers. We ask schools every
25 year if they'd like to change their admissions, if

2 they-- and we always offer Ed-Op as one of them. And
3 so again, that's something that's community driven
4 with the principal and the superintendent. We
5 certainly can do better outreach and more outreach
6 about-- about Ed-Op. But it is always an option for
7 a school.

8 COUNCILMEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you.

9 MS. KLEINHANDLER: You're welcome.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Councilmember
11 Stevens?

12 COUNCILMEMBER STEVENS: Hello. So just a couple
13 of things. I just want to start off by saying like,
14 one of my big things has always been that it's a lot
15 of emphasis put on specialized schools and Gifted and
16 Talented programs. But we have a plethora of schools
17 that are doing amazing work. And we need to get to a
18 place where young people are being matched for their
19 skills, and what they need, and what they-- their
20 support should be to the schools, because right now,
21 that just does not happen. Because-- just because
22 someone goes to a specialized school does not
23 guarantee that that's a good match for them, right?
24 But that is the narrative that's constantly being put
25 out there, because I know a lot of young people who

2 want to specialize high schools and want to screen
3 schools, and they struggled in those places, because
4 they didn't have the supports or tools that they
5 needed. I even give the example of my daughter. She
6 went to CPE-2, an elementary school, an amazing
7 school. And she's very artsy and all the things and
8 it was great for her. My nephew went there for a
9 week and was like, "I don't want to be here. This is
10 crazy." Like they are here doing art projects, like
11 they are calling their teachers by their first name.
12 I need structure and discipline. But it's a prime
13 example of how you could have two students who
14 clearly are good academically, but just need
15 different environments.

16 So my question to you is, how do we start moving
17 in that direction? Because that's not the direction
18 we're in right now. And that's not even any of the
19 things that we ever really talk about. How do we get
20 to a place where we're looking at admissions that are
21 matching young people with schools that they need,
22 with services, instead of saying like, this is a
23 specialized school, so I'm going to go there, but
24 because we have set this dynamic up, we need to
25 really start working on really unraveling that,

2 because there's a lot of public schools who are doing
3 amazing work, but just not necessarily a specialized
4 school. So how do we get there and start kind of
5 like just dismembering this-- this beast that we've
6 all created?

7 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: It's-- and Sarah,
8 I'm sure we'll have more to say about this. I agree
9 100 percent, Councilmember. Thank you for those
10 remarks. I mean, that's where we want to get to.
11 That's Chancellor Banks's vision, is yeah, one size
12 does not fit all. And all kids are brilliant and
13 capable of excelling, but not in the same areas at
14 the same times in the same environments. And so how
15 do we find those environments? I'm just going to--
16 so this is where we want to go, and we're going to
17 need your help to figure out what's the right system
18 in this huge diverse city, to get there, where we're
19 almost personalizing our attention.

20 So for high school, the answer, ultimately, I
21 believe, is we have to provide really good guidance
22 and support to students and families at every level.
23 So we have some wonderful guidance counselors. We
24 have some wonderful parent coordinators who are doing
25 great work, but every child is not getting that sit

2 down to say, "Well, if your child really is into
3 arts, he should go here."

4 COUNCILMEMBER STEVENS: But don't forget, if
5 we're starting in high school, that's part of the
6 problem, right? Like, how are we working with
7 elementary school parents, right? Because what
8 happens now is: you go to where you where you live,
9 so that's the school you go to, but that doesn't mean
10 that's a good fit. And so if we're starting at high
11 school, we're already-- already lost. So we need to
12 get to a place where we're starting elementary of
13 like, how are parents choosing schools? What are the
14 options? What are those providers? Like that--
15 like, we can't just say, "Oh, we have guidance
16 counselors in high school." Like, what are we
17 talking about? We have elementary and middle school
18 where there should be options. And that is not the
19 case now. Like parents can't be, like, my kid is not
20 thriving in the school, so I think this is a better
21 fit, so I'm going to go over here. Those things
22 don't happen because of the systems that we have set
23 up. So I would love to hear and have us start
24 thinking about how do we move in that direction,
25 starting with elementary school, starting with pre-K,

2 and all those other programs, because that's where it
3 really needs to be.

4 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: One quick thing I
5 just want to-- Yes, understood and agreed, and we
6 don't have that infrastructure now to do what you're
7 talking about. The small-- it sounded like a small
8 thing that Sarah talked about in the beginning of her
9 testimony, having one site-- and I don't know if
10 you've had a chance to look at it-- where if you are,
11 for example, your son or daughter is going into high
12 school, and you just don't know maybe you're new to
13 the city, maybe you're new to the country, what have
14 you. You can go to one site and schedule your visits
15 your tours, you can look at the videos from those
16 schools to see what is it like? What is-- how does
17 the principal talk about it. You can filter on it.
18 And I get it, not everybody has a computer, not
19 everybody is computer literate. But for a lot of
20 parents, that's a huge thing.

21 I don't know if you heard from your constituents.
22 We certainly hear it all the time: Having to go site
23 to site to site just to schedule the visits is
24 brutal. It takes hours. I say this, in part because
25 I had to do this for my two kids. So there are

2 things like that we can do, where the videos really
3 give you a window into what the school is. And then,
4 we hear you, the infrastructure for more flexibility
5 and choice.

6 COUNCILMEMBER STEVENS: Yeah, and just-- just
7 want to-- just thinking about how are we teaching
8 parents to do those things, right? Because it's one
9 thing to say we have a site and they can go there and
10 do this work. But it's more important of, like, how
11 are we starting from, you know, these pre-K programs
12 and all these things that really how to navigate and
13 really advocate. Because one of the things for me--
14 I knew my daughter, and I've been in education for 20
15 years. So I understood what she needed. I knew she
16 needed an environment where it was not as
17 restrictive, and she needed to be free, and it had to
18 have an art program. I knew those things. But most
19 parents don't know that. So we have to get to a
20 place where we're giving the parents the tools that
21 they need so they can (1) advocate for their
22 children, and also figure out the schools that they
23 want to be in. But thank you very much.

24 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Thank you,
25 Councilmember.

2 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: Why can't we use
3 library? Libraries already exist. You can partner
4 with the libraries in each areas, and this is New
5 York City, where people, parents can actually go to a
6 library, and get the tour, and get the help, and
7 organize it that way.

8 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: You may have read
9 our minds. We just had the heads of the different
10 library systems in to meet with Chancellor Banks to
11 talk about just that, Councilmember. Thank you.
12 Happy to follow up on that. We'd love to hear more
13 about how to how to leverage our relationships with
14 our with our library partners.

15 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: That's going to be a
16 joint hearing. I hear it.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I just-- just wanted to
18 emphasize what Councilmember Stevens said. And
19 that's something when we met and I talked about:
20 That parents should have toolkits that they can refer
21 to, to navigate the system, because it's complicated.
22 And we are-- and I am a parent of four that went
23 through the public school system as well. So I know
24 how to navigate that system, but my neighbor may not
25 know. So I've been saying that from day one. We

2 need FAQs for the parents toolkits for them to
3 navigate the system to help support them. And we--
4 this is a conversation we have as Youth Chair and Ed
5 Chair, we talk about this all the time that we need
6 to start this foundation in elementary. Not when
7 they get to high school. It's already too late.

8 Elementary, you build a strong foundation and
9 they should be able to-- to do this.

10 But I have one question since you put up-- yes,
11 and to add on DYCD to help do some of that work.

12 COUNCILMEMBER STEVENS: Bring them in.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Bring them in. We're ready.

14 As you talked about pre-K went up today. We get
15 a lot of calls and phone calls about a few things.
16 Centralized 3-K and Pre-K enrollment process is
17 complicated, difficult to navigate for families. So
18 I'm hoping you're thinking as you're rolling it out
19 to simplify it. As CBOs have previously supported
20 families were eliminated from enrollment process,
21 what is the DOE doing to ensure families apply to
22 early childhood programs receive effective guidance
23 and support in connecting them to the care option
24 that best meets their preference and needs. You hear
25 that? Preference and needs. Has DOE considered

2 streamlining the process making it more timely and
3 family-friendly, and including CBOs who are often
4 able to offer more culturally and linguistically
5 responsive support in navigating eligibility and
6 enrollment care.

7 MS. KLEINHANDLER: So for the first time this
8 year, we sent out a spot-- we sent out spotlight
9 emails to families that highlighted and explained the
10 different programming options including FCCs. We
11 hold virtual events for families that are translated.
12 We're always available to support families' questions
13 via email and 311, and in person at our Family
14 Welcome Centers, and we know there's more to do. But
15 were ready-- we're ready and willing to support all
16 families who want a 3-K or pre-K option.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Are the options listed on
18 your DOE sites?

19 MS. KLEINHANDLER: They are and, this year family
20 childcare sites have been included in the central 3-K
21 application process. And that's-- that's been so for
22 several years. And were-- there-- they were
23 starting-- we started it as a pilot and we expand
24 each year to make sure those FCC sites are up.

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And clarify. How is the
3 partnership working with ACS and the providers? How
4 does that work?

5 MS. KLEINHANDLER: So I mean that the--

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: For your Early Learn
7 Program.

8 MS. KLEINHANDLER: Yes. So the Division of Early
9 Childhood really is-- leads that partnership with
10 ACS. So I would come back to you with information on
11 that. In terms of our enrollment, we work very
12 closely with the Office of Early Childhood to ensure
13 that we are making improvements and making things
14 easier for families

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Agencies have to talk to
16 each other. We're finding as Councilmembers that
17 nobody talks to each other. One agency doesn't know
18 what the other one is doing, but yet you're doing the
19 same work and in the same space. So we would love to
20 see that: better communication.

21 COUNSEL: Thank you Chair. We will now turn to
22 public testimony. We will be limiting public
23 testimony today to three minutes each. For in-person
24 panelists please come up to the table once your name
25 has been called. For virtual panelists, once your

2 name is called a member of our staff will unmute you
3 and the Sergeant At Arms will set the timer and give
4 you the go ahead to begin. Please wait for the
5 sergeant to announce that you may begin before
6 delivering your testimony. Our first in person panel
7 will be--

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you DOE for your
9 testimony for today. Thank you

10 COUNSEL: So our first in person panel will be
11 New York City Comptroller Brad Lander and Sadye
12 Campoamor. You may come up to the table.

13 COMPTROLLER LANDER: You ready for us?

14 COUNSEL: Yes, you may begin your testimony.

15 COMPTROLLER LANDER: Thank you so much. Good
16 afternoon, Chair Joseph and members of the Council's
17 Education Committee. It's great to be here with you.
18 Thank you for the opportunity. I'm also joined by
19 Sadye Campoamor, who is the Chief Equity Officer in
20 the Office of the Comptroller, and who was previously
21 the Executive Director of Family and Community
22 Empowerment at the DOE and a member of the District
23 15 Diversity Plan Working Group.

24 This has been a very rich and diverse to hearing.
25 Public education is-- is both the foundation of our

2 democracy, a place where young people learn how to be
3 active members of our diverse society, but also a
4 microcosm of its shortcomings since the patterns of
5 our segregated, unequal world reproduce themselves
6 too much in and through our schools. So it's not a
7 surprise that in the third-most segregated city in
8 the country, we have the most segregated school
9 system, and facing up to it honestly is a requirement
10 for us.

11 As a City Councilmember, I began working on
12 confronting school segregation in 2014, on the 60th
13 anniversary of Brown vs. Board with staff member Jan
14 Atwell, and others who are in the room, when the UCLA
15 Civil Rights Project reported that New York have the
16 most segregated schools in the nation. After an
17 extensive council hearing, we passed the School
18 Diversity Accountability Act, which required regular
19 reporting, and the he setting of a real Northstar of
20 combating school segregation. Nearly three years
21 later, because of the organizing of young people and
22 communities, that School Diversity Countability
23 Advisory Group (which sounds like it hasn't met in
24 some time) began meeting and the DOE committed to an
25 active effort to promote diversity in our schools.

2 As part of that initial plan, they offered
3 districts the opportunity to step up and say we want
4 to do-- engage community process that would enable us
5 to confront segregation and promote diversity in our
6 schools. That led to the D-15 diversity plan, which
7 was developed through a highly engaged process out in
8 communities, in Sunset Park, in Red Hook, in multiple
9 languages. And after an extensive year-long process,
10 that 16-member working group brought to the community
11 an extensive set of recommendations that ultimately
12 involve the removal of all middle school screens, and
13 admissions priority for students who qualify as low-
14 income ELL students in temporary housing at 52%, the
15 same percent they are in the district as a whole, and
16 detailed proposals for genuinely supporting that
17 transition with the 5 R's of real integration and the
18 support that school communities need.

19 I won't go into all of what it took, but there
20 was enormous joy when that plan was adopted. And I'm
21 pleased to say despite the pandemic, the planning for
22 MXY studio is currently working with the district 15
23 superintendent and the CEC on an evaluation which
24 will be available later this spring. I've got some
25 bullets on page three, it looks like, which go into--

2 the middle of page two, I apologize, which go into
3 some of the findings of that.

4 But you know, what we're really hearing is that
5 families and staff celebrate the values of the plan,
6 find that it's less stressful for students, that
7 there are real challenges like transportation and the
8 loss of Title One funds at schools that had just
9 above 60% students in poverty and now are below, and
10 aren't getting Title One Funds anymore.

11 So there's a lot we are learning and that I
12 think, can serve to advise schools all around the
13 city.

14 That plan in many ways was the model for this law
15 passed-- the law that passed, that Councilmember
16 Hanif asked about, about doing district level
17 planning. Those plans, you know, you might have
18 listened to School Colors Season Two and heard some
19 of the challenges with them. They were put on pause
20 during the pandemic. But what's interesting is the
21 pandemic, of course, forced the suspension of screens
22 much more broadly. And so we've got the chart that I
23 think in some ways Councilmember Avilés was
24 requesting that looks at the numbers that DOE spoke
25 about -- it's at the back of the testimony -- of the

2 extraordinary drop in screens and middle schools all
3 across the city, but really concentrated in district
4 1, 2, 3, and 13, which were overwhelmingly screened,
5 and are now entirely unscreened.

6 So it's a remarkable set of steps forward, but we
7 do need to use this moment to really understand
8 what's going on in those schools. So I think in
9 place, in some ways, of what was happening as like,
10 are we going to do it district diversity planning?
11 We could take the model of what D-15 is doing now and
12 say, "What's going on in those schools and districts?
13 And what do we need to actually support the un-
14 screening that's happened to make sure it's genuinely
15 showing up for all those schools, and all those
16 students." And I think it really is a profound
17 opportunity to take a significant next step forward.

18 If you'll grant it -- I know there's a lot of
19 people here to testify -- Sadye has some testimony as
20 well from her experience as a member of that working
21 group about what really made it work.

22 MS. CAMPOAMOR: Thank you. Thank you, Chair
23 Joseph, and thank you to the Councilmembers and the
24 Education Committee. My name is Sadye Campoamor. I
25 serve as the Chief Equity Officer to the New York

2 City Comptroller. I am a proud New York City public
3 school graduate, and I'm also a public school parent.
4 So these issues are not only of great professional
5 importance to me, but also personal.

6 I previously served, as mentioned, as the
7 Executive Director of Family and Community Engagement
8 at the New York City Department of Education, and was
9 there also as a lead for the school diversity and
10 integration efforts.

11 I come before you today to reiterate what the
12 controller has said: That this is not only a call
13 for moving children of color into predominantly white
14 spaces, as we know that this has caused harm and
15 reinforces mental models that perpetuate both
16 interpersonal and internalized racism. However-- nor
17 is this a call to eliminate or call against for
18 affinity spaces and the need for them for our
19 students. But as a member of the District 15
20 Diversity Plans Working Group, I recall being
21 enlightened and educated by student activists from
22 Integrate NYC. Their 5-R framework, later adopted by
23 the mayor and the Chancellor, offers us, and the
24 Department of Education in particular, an opportunity
25 to divorce itself from 20th century desegregation,

2 and an invitation to 21st century integration,
3 specifically real integration.

4 So briefly, the five R's are:

5 Representation, that ask us to look at the racial
6 representation of educators in New York City. Right
7 now, teachers self-identify at close to 80% as white
8 women when nearly 85% of our students identify as
9 students of color.

10 Resources ask us to fund schools equitably. It
11 requires us to take, additionally, an expansive view
12 on what resources and equitable resources mean,
13 access to internships, PTA funding, social capital
14 that leads to student's upward mobility. I want to
15 thank and applaud the hard work of the Fair Student
16 Funding Task Force, the Mayor, and the Chancellor for
17 adding the additional weights to the fair student
18 formula as it puts into practice centering our most
19 institutionally marginalized students.

20 Restorative practices asks us to rethink our
21 approach in relationship to school discipline, and
22 who gets suspended. It asks that if-- if and when we
23 integrate schools, that we also interrogate what
24 safety means to our students.

2 Real relationships invites school communities to
3 dig deeper into one another. I was born in El
4 Salvador and I am part of the Nahua people. I never
5 heard of that country nor that tribe mentioned one
6 time in my K through 12 experience in New York City
7 Public Schools. The result at best is that I felt
8 unseen, and at worst I felt a sense of shame. We
9 don't want our students to be put in that position
10 ever again. And I want to just call out that New
11 York City Outward Bound Schools has a way to embed
12 real relationships in their daily practice called
13 Crew.

14 Last but not least Race In Enrollment, which
15 speaks to student demographics across the city. 77%
16 of black and Latinx students attends to schools that
17 are less than 10% white, and according to Stanford
18 University, the average black student in New York
19 City had a poverty rate of 22% points higher than the
20 average white students. Concentrations of poverty
21 are associated with endemic violence, higher levels
22 of stress, disparities in academic achievement, and
23 many other disadvantages. This, coupled with racial
24 isolation are the conditions that conspire to make
25 segregation so pernicious.

2 Before I go, I wanted to share a few key
3 ingredients that made our District 15 Working Groups
4 successful, and some of those folks are in the room.
5 So I just want to give them a shout as well. I want
6 to continue for you to encourage the DOE to follow
7 through on their Local Law that you passed in 2019.
8 But I also believe in harnessing the best practices
9 so that we can move towards our shared goals.

10 So first, anti-racism and DEI training for all
11 working groups was really helpful, because it
12 provided shared language and a student-centered
13 equity lens which folks need. We provided childcare.
14 We provided meals, translation and interpretation
15 (our working group was a dual-language working
16 group), transportation, student voice paired with
17 youth adult partnership at practices so that young
18 people at the table can be heard, and data
19 visualization so that it's accessible and
20 transparent. These are not one-size-fits-all models
21 (you guys represent a variety of communities in New
22 York City), nor are community driven processes a
23 destination, but they are a mechanism to foster more
24 integrated school systems that do more than just move

2 bodies and recreate harm from the past, but
3 critically examine our admissions policies and more.

4 We have educational models to draw from right
5 now, including ICT classes, integrating co-teaching,
6 school wide enrichment, community schools, community
7 redesign, building utilization, and performance based
8 assessments.

9 So the invitation today is for us to keep going
10 as if our multiracial democracy depended on it,
11 because it does. Thank you so much for the
12 opportunity.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: It does. Have you have
14 reached out or engaged the New York City Public
15 Schools in seeing this model and probably duplicating
16 it in other districts?

17 Yeah? No? There's been crickets. It's
18 crickets.

19 COMPTROLLER LANDER: I mean, and-- you know, you
20 heard the prior panel. The-- what's in-- the
21 pandemic shutdown the diversity planning processes,
22 and it doesn't sound like they have restarted. But I
23 guess what I-- and there's a lot more than middle
24 schools. You know, what we were doing in District
25 15, at the end was looking at some of our elementary

2 schools, given new seat need. You guys talked about
3 what's happening in pre-K and 3-K. As you're
4 building a whole new system, it's a perfect time to
5 think about what you might do differently, because
6 nobody already has something they're holding on tight
7 to.

8 But I do also think the opportunity to look at
9 the middle schools -- as so many of them have been
10 unscreened -- would-- this would be a good time to
11 kind of combine the practices that worked in the D-15
12 planning process, with some of what's new on the
13 ground.

14 I guess the way I think of it is like, you don't
15 get to decide whether segregation is okay in your
16 community school district or not, like-- we're still
17 the UCLA Civil Rights Project found the most
18 segregated, you know, schools in the-- in the nation.
19 So we have a collective obligation to move forward.
20 But you want community engagement and real planning,
21 about how to look at that and how to move forward
22 through it. And that-- you've got to start with
23 where you are. And we're in a very different place,
24 coming out of the pandemic than we were, and some
25 places of real opportunity, like pre-K and 3-K

2 expansion, and unscreened middle schools. So this
3 would be a good moment to push forward. And that's
4 why we thought your hearing was so important.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Correct. The pandemic was a
6 way for us not to go back to normal.

7 COMPTROLLER LANDER: Yeah.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: But I noticed that we went
9 back to the same business. And we cannot afford to,
10 as you said. So Pre-K/3 will be the opportunity to
11 desegregate and move forward and create models from
12 there.

13 MS. CAMPOAMOR: Absolutely.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much for your
15 testimony.

16 MS. CAMPOAMOR: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And I do have a school in
18 District 15.

19 COUNSEL: Thank you to our first panel. Our next
20 in person panel will be Julianne Huang, Hudson Chu,
21 Sandra Liu[ph], and Bonnie Chi[ph]. Please make your
22 way to the table.

23 You may begin your testimony.

24 Good afternoon. First, I would like to thank
25 Chair Joseph and the Council for allowing this

2 conversation. My name is Julianne Huang, a junior at
3 Staten Island Tech in Staten Island.

4 As the nation's only pan-Asian children's
5 advocacy organization, Coalition for Asian American
6 Children and Families aims to improve the health and
7 well-being of Asian American and Pacific Islander
8 children and families in New York City. I'm a youth
9 advocate at the Asian American Student Advocacy
10 Project's Anti-Bullying and Harassment Campaign. Our
11 campaign team aims to equip both students and
12 teachers with the necessary means to recognize and
13 properly address cases of bullying, harassment, and
14 to advocate for an all-around safe and affirmative
15 environment in schools.

16 Most bullying is subtle, not loud enough that
17 it's concerning for teachers to take notice, but
18 enough for students to carry it with them for the
19 rest of their adolescence and onwards. And bullying
20 hurts the most when it's something when it targets
21 something you can't change about yourself. If a
22 student makes fun of your shirt, you're able to
23 switch it off the next day. But if they make fun of
24 the language, your-- your grandparents are speaking
25 to you when they're picking you up, or the way your

2 eyes are shaped, it isn't so easy to switch those
3 out.

4 In middle school, there are plenty of cases of
5 AAPI students getting picked on for their identity.
6 But these jabs were often disguised as jokes. And if
7 you couldn't take it, you were called weak or
8 sensitive, and these moments went ignored because
9 teachers, administrators, and even fellow students
10 saw the slights as normal behavior, not bullying.

11 But what is bullying? Don't microaggressions
12 count as bullying if they harm your sense of self?
13 Currently at my school, there's only one Respect For
14 All liaison who's responsible for handling any
15 matters of bullying, harassment, discrimination, or
16 intimidation by a student or staff member. There's a
17 video on our school website where our liaison
18 introduces herself and encourages students to come
19 talk to her if they feel like they're harassing
20 anyway. However, in the video and on the website,
21 there isn't much information on what action will be
22 taken after reporting.

23 Simply encouraging students to report is not
24 enough. We must assure them that help and justice

2 will be restored after they share their vulnerable
3 experiences.

4 In freshman year, one of my friends was cyber-
5 bullied for her weight by one of her classmates. She
6 reported it to the school but very little was done.
7 It was the bully's first offense, so he was let off
8 with simply a warning, with no mention of the impact
9 his actions had on my friend, and no context or
10 understanding, which created the conditions for the
11 cyber bullying to continue.

12 This kind of restorative action is unacceptable.
13 The impact of the harmful actions and comments were
14 not properly addressed and the care and support my
15 friend deserves was not provided.

16 At CACF and ASAP we believe that students must
17 feel safe in all aspects of both pre and post
18 bullying incidents. Safety is not defined by
19 punishment for wrongdoings, but by the presence of
20 student wellness. Every student deserves to feel
21 safe in their identity. Moving forward, the anti-
22 bullying harassment team at ASAP is happy to work
23 with the Committee of Education together to ensure
24 that all students are seen, heard, and supported in
25 an inclusive school community.

2 Thank you for the opportunity to share these
3 thoughts.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Go ahead.

5 MR. CHOU: Good afternoon. First I'd like to
6 thank Chair Joseph and the Council for this
7 opportunity to speak. My name is Hudson Chou, and
8 I'm a senior at NYC iSchool in SoHo. Better? I'm a
9 Youth Advocate at the Asian American Student Advocacy
10 Project, or ASAP for short. I'm participating in
11 ASAP's mental health campaign, which aims to identify
12 the gaps within mental health education and
13 culturally responsive services at NYC public schools.
14 At CACF and ASAP, we believe every student deserves
15 to feel safe in their school and their own identity.
16 Currently, this is not the case.

17 I know that personally, I've been targeted
18 microaggressions from fellow students at school and
19 on occasion from teachers. I'd love to go to school
20 and not be asked if I need a pair of chopsticks, or
21 if I've failed my driver's test yet. And I'd love to
22 go to school and not be treated like an exotic beast
23 from a faraway land. And yet, I can't. I know that
24 my experience with microaggressions and bullying
25 isn't unique. And I know that thousands of other

2 AAPI students in New York City have the same
3 treatment. However, school staff are unable to
4 recognize and respond to these microaggressions.
5 Through your support of this taskforce, you can help
6 start the process of prevention and treatment.
7 Currently, anti-bullying services at my school are
8 minimal at best. There are two guidance counselors
9 for a school of nearly 500 students. As-- as I
10 understand it, this is a rather high ratio for a New
11 York City School. These counselors are often
12 unapproachable, as being a guidance counselor is
13 often not their only obligation.

14 For students who might face bullying, care should
15 be present and accessible in a timely manner. I feel
16 that with our current status, there is no support
17 system or safety net for students who might be
18 seriously struggling which can affect their mental
19 health and overall wellbeing.

20 Additionally, there are no teachers who regularly
21 monitor the halls during times of class transitions,
22 which sometimes leads to physical altercations or
23 unchecked catcalling and other harassment.

24 I hope that the establishment of a taskforce can
25 help solve both of these problems as they could form

2 a standard to hold schools accountable to both in
3 terms of the counselor-to-student ratio, as well as
4 regular preventative measures in busy areas on or
5 near school grounds.

6 While we applaud the Education Committee for the
7 call to establish a Bullying Prevention Taskforce,
8 we'd like to emphasize that the focus on safety
9 should not mean that students are punished for
10 wrongdoing, but instead on making the school a place
11 of student wellness.

12 To address this issue, we hope the city places a
13 priority on education, restorative justice, and
14 healing as we strongly believe that this will result
15 in the desired outcome of overall improved student
16 wellness.

17 ASAP is ready and willing to work together with
18 the Council on the establishment of this taskforce to
19 ensure that it would create an inclusive and
20 affirming school environment and hold our schools
21 accountable.

22 Thank you again for the opportunity to speak here
23 today.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Go ahead.

2 MS. LIU[PH]: Good afternoon. First, I would
3 like to thank Chair Joseph and the Council for
4 allowing this conversation. My name is Sandra and
5 I'm a high school student in New York City. I'm a
6 youth advocate at the Asian American Student Advocacy
7 Project's, Anti-Bullying and Harassment Campaign.
8 ASAP is a youth leadership program for AAPI youth
9 from across New York City. Our campaign team aims to
10 empower and prepare AAPI youth for when they are
11 faced with race-based bullying and harassment, and to
12 advocate for more transparent safety measures for
13 students within the public school systems through
14 workshops and trainings. My favorite day time after
15 day in elementary school was undoubtedly snack time.
16 I still vividly recall my classmates and my joy as we
17 sped walk to the cubby in the front of the room to
18 see what foods we each brought to eat that day.
19 Cookies, chips, pretzels, and even though occasional
20 brownie or cupcake that everyone envied. One
21 afternoon, one of my friends brought dried anchovies
22 as her snack, a flavorful Asian delicacy. However,
23 my teacher felt concerned about her snack choice and
24 offered her goldfish crackers instead.

2 Well, my friend and I thought nothing much of it
3 afterwards, I remember feeling confused as to why it
4 was only her snack that was being replaced. This
5 memory has stuck with me for years, but it wasn't
6 until recently that I recognized it as a form of
7 micro-invalidating.

8 Even though my teacher had the intention of being
9 caring rather than disrespectful. My teacher's
10 actions indirectly imply that in a classroom setting,
11 cultural food is less acceptable than the mainstream
12 snacks that we find at grocery stores.

13 Oftentimes, the definition of bullying places an
14 emphasis on physical violence, and emotional and
15 verbal bullying such as microaggressions are hardly
16 mentioned.

17 Often people including students and teachers
18 engaging in these microaggressions may not even be
19 aware of the impact of their words or actions.
20 Because microaggressions may be unintentional and/or
21 normalized, they can be hard to detect. Despite
22 this, they can still perpetuate harmful stereotypes
23 and are still hurtful to targeted individuals. When
24 continually faced with microaggressions, AAPI
25 students may feel sidelined in school, which is an

2 environment teachers and administrators and students
3 all have a hand in creating.

4 As students we deserve to feel safe about our own
5 identities in our schools. There should be more
6 steps taken to ensure that microaggressions are
7 properly addressed. Most of the time.
8 microaggressions stem from a gap in knowledge about
9 various cultures or incorrect stereotypes. We hope
10 that schools will address this issue by holding more
11 town halls and workshops where students and teachers
12 can discuss microaggressions and their experiences.

13 These conversations will hopefully result in
14 students and staff having a better understanding of
15 each other, leading to less assumptions being
16 circulated in schools. ASAP is ready to work with
17 the Committee on Education on this taskforce to
18 ensure that we can implement solutions like these and
19 can work together to make schools a safer community.

20 Thank you so much for your time.

21 MS. CHI[PH]: Good morning. First, I want to
22 thank Chair Joseph and the Council for allowing this
23 conversation. My name is Bonnie Chi[ph], and I'm a
24 student at a New York City public high school. I'm a
25 Youth Advocate at the Asian American Student Advocacy

2 Project's Language Access Campaign, and our campaign
3 aims to gather AAPI youth to share their personal
4 story and advocate for English language learner
5 inclusion by addressing social stigma and barriers
6 they face in public schools.

7 Bullying has been prevalent in the school system
8 for a long time. It can range from violence to
9 microaggressions. Even small, hateful remarks can
10 cause lasting harm towards individuals. It is never
11 okay to normalize violence. It is not okay to
12 normalize the small jokes people say to others that
13 are different from them. It's also not normal for my
14 friend to have no source of support or care after
15 being bullied for her identity. I mean, who was she
16 supposed to turn to? Teachers that always seemed to
17 be busy? Guidance counselors that she never knew
18 existed? Or her parents who wanted to lay low and
19 didn't want to cause any trouble for the school?

20 We all know bullying is a long, unaddressed
21 issues in schools and a cause for attention. As an
22 AAPI, it can be super hard to speak up about
23 bullying. My parents are first-generation
24 immigrants, and they have a hard time adjusting to
25 the customs of this country. From a young age, I was

2 told not to cause trouble. For many of my friends
3 who are AAPI English language learners, people make
4 fun of their first language and the way they speak
5 too often. No one should be made fun of just because
6 English is not the first language. School should be
7 a place where all identities and languages are
8 welcomed and cherished. For AAPI youth, bullying can
9 take forms of microaggressions, which can seem like a
10 small case from the teachers perspective. That
11 really made it hard for me to talk about when people
12 started singling out for my identity, especially my
13 race, calling me to go back to where you came from,
14 or even snickering behind my back. Even then, I
15 never knew of telling an adult because I never knew
16 that was considered bullying. These incidents happen
17 in school hallways, classrooms, and open spaces, yet
18 no teacher did anything in response to them. In CACF
19 and ASAP, we believe that every student, regardless
20 of their identity, should feel safe in schools.
21 School shouldn't feel like a place where people get
22 to judge you based on their identity. We believe
23 that safety-- safety isn't policing students or
24 punishing students for their wrongdoing, but that

2 safety is the presence of student wellness. We look
3 forward to working with you.

4 Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: : Thank you. Shekar?

6 COUNCILMEMBER KRISHNAN: I just wanted to say to
7 you all, thank you so much for your testimony today,
8 too, and for speaking out so powerfully against
9 bullying and microaggressions. As an Asian American
10 child myself one day, and issues not so long ago, you
11 know, I think one of the most powerful ways to end
12 this kind of bullying and stigma is to speak out,
13 exactly how you're doing, and to raise visibility of
14 us, as youth, as communities, and to be unafraid in
15 doing so. And those are the values that I teach my
16 children too, that are now seven and four and we talk
17 about bullying, and you all are exemplifying it too.
18 So thank you all so much.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you for your
20 testimony.

21 COUNSEL: Thank you so much. Our next panel will
22 be Kaushik Das, Alysa O'Shea, Steven Stowe, and Nyah
23 Berg. Please come up to the table.

24 MR. STOWE: Want to go first?

25 COUNSEL: You may begin your testimony, Kaushik.

2 Yeah, we'll start with Kaushik and go down.

3 MR. DAS: We didn't see-- I'm Kaushik. In other
4 words--

5 COUNSEL: Oh. Okay. Okay. So we'll start with
6 Kaushik Das, then Alysa O'Shea, then Steven Stowe,
7 and then Nyah Berg.

8 MR. DAS: Okay. Thank you for having us.
9 Although I'm disappointed that a lot of the
10 Councilmembers couldn't stay, as well as the members
11 of the DOE, because my comments are meant for them.
12 But I'll speak to who is-- who is remaining and thank
13 you for staying. I'm the Vice President of District
14 2, which is one of the largest-- my President
15 couldn't attend. I do speak on behalf of most of my--
16 - of actually all the officers who are in agreement
17 on this. We are-- the we represent the largest
18 district in-- one of the largest districts in New
19 York City, depending on how you cut it -- whether its
20 students number of schools, geographic area -- we
21 represent 40% of Manhattan. So I'm particularly
22 disappointed that Eric Bottcher and Julie Menin
23 couldn't stay.

24 In any case, I'm going to talk today, but D-2 is
25 broadly bashed for being one of the wealthiest, and

2 often white and Asian, which often is equated with
3 privilege -- and I resent that Asians are often
4 associated that way. But despite the fact that it
5 might be one of the wealthiest districts, it also has
6 the most disparity of haves and have nots, and has
7 the largest influx of asylum-seeking students. So I
8 absolutely resent what's happened in admissions in
9 District 2. I often like what the Chancellor has to
10 say. I like what he has to say about the four
11 pillars-- for its four pillars. That has not been
12 the experience of what's happened in District 2.
13 Broadly speaking admissions criteria has not worked
14 in our district. It did not work under the De Blasio
15 administration, which was characterized by an
16 uninspired lottery and lowering of standards, as
17 Councilmember Dinowitz mentioned. The current
18 Chancellor and Mayor asked us to give them a chance,
19 but after two years of admission cycles, it continues
20 to not work for us. District 2 enrollment from pre-K
21 through 8th grade has dropped by almost 7150 students
22 or 26% from 2019 to 2022. To put it in perspective,
23 that's almost the size of one of the smaller
24 educational districts in our city.

2 It hasn't worked on the high school level.
3 Despite improving a complicated bucketing system, it
4 continues to rely on lottery, no state test, and
5 despite the fact that 90%-- and this is despite the
6 fact that 90% of students took the state test last
7 year, and that we have systems in place like NWA and
8 other systems in our-- in our school systems.

9 It has not worked in the middle school level. It
10 has failed to offer screening, and any above-grade
11 learning in ELA, social studies, languages, as well
12 as science for two over the three years.

13 It has not worked for G&T expansion. We have
14 only-- after two years we have only one additional
15 classroom and continued subjective measures that
16 basically funnel into yet another lottery system, yet
17 another instance of DOE Powerball.

18 For middle school admissions, our council took
19 the unusual measure of a second vote of no confidence
20 this January, after a first in our superintendents.
21 This is after a first vote of no confidence in
22 December, after rejecting his-- his middle school
23 plan the-- the month before, and after we ourselves
24 had laid out a detailed plan in October, which
25 offered a mix of lottery, screen schools, schools

2 that offered accelerated courses within their within
3 the schools, as well as a variety of other plans
4 including dual-language programs. Only one of these
5 suggestions was taken.

6 The DOE came here and said that they've been
7 responsive to our community. They have not. In
8 every one of our engagements, whether-- whether it
9 was from the DOE or the CDC, parents overwhelmingly
10 spoke in favor of screened admissions in middle
11 school and a range of choices for-- for our students.

12 What was most egregious is that our
13 superintendent went out of his way to-- to engage the
14 Chinatown and Chinese-speaking community, in an
15 engagement in I believe, September or October, and
16 that video was lost. Even though those parents
17 unanimously spoke in favor of the screened admission.
18 Not only did they speak in university in favor of it,
19 they did not even understand the concepts of lottery
20 or why students would be chosen on such-- on such
21 grounds.

22 The margin-- the majority of CCD-2 also pointed
23 out that District 2 was awarded a \$3.2 million grant
24 for the New York State Integration Project, a phase 3
25 grant from NYSED, and the majority of CCD-2 thinks

2 that the superintendent is in violation of this
3 grant, is in violation of state law, and is
4 misallocating NYSED funds for integration for the
5 purposes that they were not intended.

6 Regarding high school admissions, District 2
7 priority was removed under-- under de Blasio.
8 Despite the fact that many of our high schools were
9 created to address the fact that there were not
10 enough seats for graduating students in District 2 in
11 Manhattan. As a result, 18% of the students received
12 none of their 12 choices, and this was 11% for all of
13 Manhattan. Despite this fact, under the current
14 Chancellor-- under the continuing plan, this was not
15 changed, and again, for another year 18% of our
16 students in our district and 11% of Manhattan
17 students received none of their 12 choices. There is
18 still continued to be no change for this year.

19 Regarding G&T, so to date we have one additional
20 third grade class, despite overwhelming demand in our
21 district, and another year of de facto lottery, as de
22 facto lottery, and I've even though have asked the
23 Superintendent and-- and Enrollment to look into
24 this, there have been many, many cases of many
25 teachers who-- who recommend all of their students or

2 none of their students, either because they don't--
3 either because they believe-- don't believe in the
4 system, or believe that all children are gifted. All
5 children may be gifted, but not all children are
6 academically gifted, just like all children are not
7 designed to be based basketball stars, excellent
8 swimmers, Olympic athletes, World Cup soccer players
9 or the like.

10 I'd also like to reject the notion a little bit
11 that we have the most segregated school system. We
12 don't. We have the most segregated housing system,
13 which results in schools that are segregated-- that
14 reflect their community. And the onus is not on the
15 DOE or parents to fix this. The onus is on-- is to
16 fix the housing if that's what you choose to desire.

17 I also caution against the D-15 plan, which has
18 been touted many times today. There's dubious
19 evidence that diversity was-- was increased.
20 However, there is plenty of evidence that the
21 transportation time of all students was increased.
22 There's also evidence that enrollment decreased even
23 before COVID. What there is no evidence of in this
24 plan is no evidence that academic outcomes actually
25 improved. Which is often the touted reason why

2 should we should improve our diversity. I
3 categorically reject the notion that-- that was that
4 was presented by Lincoln Restler that lottery
5 increases diversity. The experiences in our district
6 point that to be exactly not the case. Several
7 principals have pointed out that after the
8 introduction of lottery, diversity decreased.
9 Basically, schools that are in Chinatown, reflected
10 more Chinese students. Schools that were in white
11 neighborhoods had more white students at the end of
12 lottery. And this effect has never been-- has never
13 been looked at. And we just always touted instantly
14 that this is-- this is a great plan, this is
15 increasing diversity, and it increases educational
16 outcomes, which it has never, ever, ever shown to be
17 the case.

18 And lastly, regarding educational outcomes, we
19 always talk about how diversity should be increased
20 in that improves educational outcomes. A lot of the--
21 - the United States ranks very poorly compared to
22 their peers, in-- in science in math, even reading,
23 even English and certainly in languages broadly
24 speaking.

2 New York is no is no standout among our 50 states
3 in that regard. We always say that-- point to
4 diversity. A lot of these international school
5 systems don't have a lot of diversity in their
6 systems, yet they produce better outcomes. What
7 parents want is better schools for their children.
8 They don't want to be-- they want to-- they don't
9 want to travel large distances for a diversity that
10 may or may not improve educational outcomes through
11 the system. They want educational-- better
12 educational outcomes for their children where they
13 live.

14 And the end-all-be-all should not be to increase
15 diversity but to improve our outcomes. And the goal
16 should not be to change the goal line at the high
17 school level, or even at the middle school level,
18 because studies show that that's too late. We need
19 to fix math standards and reading comprehension
20 standards by kindergarten, first grade, second grade
21 third grade, at the latest and not change the finish
22 line at the middle school and high school level.

23 Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you for your
25 testimony. Next person.

2 Hi, good afternoon. My name is Alysa O'Shea. I
3 am the parent-elected representative from Queens on
4 the Citywide Council on High Schools. We represent
5 approximately 320,000 families in the public school
6 system, and I'd like to say thank you Councilmember
7 Joseph for attending our meeting last month. We
8 encourage all City Councilmembers to drop in whenever
9 they want and come by and say hello.

10 I'm going to relay a brief history of our
11 Council's engagement over high school admission
12 policies with our stakeholders in the NYC DOE as well
13 as our recommendations moving forward.

14 CCHS recommended tightening academic bands for
15 the current admissions cycle. We feel that merit and
16 hard work should be recognized in the placement
17 process. In the previous admissions cycle, we
18 receive feedback that Tier 1 was too broad and did
19 not yield proper placements for many families. We
20 also advocated for the expansion of waitlist
21 timelines and increased transparency around the
22 realistic chances of attaining obtaining a seat in a
23 waitlisted school. What if a scholar didn't get any
24 of their 12 choices? CCHS worked closely with OSC to
25 develop questionnaires and outreach to these

2 students. We received many complaints around this in
3 the 2021-22 term, particularly in Manhattan's
4 District 2. We saw data exhibiting an overall skew
5 against placing students of Asian descent in their
6 listed choices. My fear is that many families simply
7 left the system if they had the means, instead of
8 choosing to navigate a confusing system of waitlists
9 and random placements far from home.

10 CCHS also advocated for geographic priority,
11 especially in the borough of Queens, where there is
12 an enormous need for high school seats that far
13 outweighs availability. We also advocated this year
14 for streamlined applications on an earlier timeline,
15 which DOE responded to. CCHS successfully advocated
16 for OSC to publish assigned numbers for student
17 lottery numbers in their MySchools count. Yet many
18 families still do not understand the key role that
19 lottery numbers play in how a school ranks them. And
20 we call for more transparency around how these
21 numbers are formulated. CCHS does not believe that
22 lottery numbers are the answer for increasing
23 diversity.

24 So what will increase diversity? Academic
25 environments in elementary and middle schools that

2 lead to preparedness for our high schools. CCHS
3 would like to see a return to Algebra For All being
4 offered in all middle schools. We must recover from
5 pandemic learning loss and strongly focus on
6 mathematics and literacy to elevate our scholars'
7 scores and abilities.

8 Another suggestion is to begin CTE and STEM
9 oriented programs earlier in middle school students
10 have a defined idea of what they might want to
11 explore in the high school level.

12 New York City has approximately 400 high schools
13 with 700 different programs. Of these an estimated
14 15% have traditionally used screens based on academic
15 performance of applicants to select admitted
16 students. We would also like to see more outreach,
17 materials, and preparations offered in multiple
18 languages, especially to our seventh and eighth grade
19 families in underserved districts. CCHS believes
20 that this will increase community knowledge of
21 available SHS accelerated learning academies, while
22 increasing diversity and academic outcomes for our
23 families. We wholeheartedly support Chancellor
24 Bank's promise for the development of accelerated
25 learning environments in Brooklyn, the Bronx, and

2 Southeast Queens, and we advocate for the
3 construction of additional specialized high schools,
4 especially in Queens.

5 CCHS would like to see a return to individual
6 schools designing screening criteria that fits their
7 mission and learning environment. We strongly
8 advocate for a return to include a state test scores
9 in the admissions process, and we hope to work with
10 NYC DOE to reinstate this important criterion.

11 And I'll just close with this: We want our
12 students to be in an appropriate learning environment
13 where they are met at their entry point wherever that
14 is, and then challenged to expand and properly
15 prepare for higher education and career training
16 programs.

17 One additional suggestion is to create and fund
18 high school bridge programs for remedial skills for
19 incoming ninth graders, so they are ready to learn
20 starting in September when they go to high school.

21 Thank you so much for allowing me to testify
22 today.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: The next person.

24 MR. STOWE: Good afternoon, Chair Joseph. It's
25 nice to see you again. And good afternoon, remaining

2 members of the Education Committee and those online.
3 My name is Steven Stowe. I serve as President of the
4 Community Education Council for District 20 in
5 southwest Brooklyn. The comments are my own although
6 our CEC has passed several Resolutions supporting
7 many of the comments I will make.

8 Before my prepared statement, I just want to
9 address a point made earlier by Councilmember Alexa
10 Avilés, who has represented many of the families in
11 my district. She pointed out that there was a G&T
12 program in District 15 that only had 11 students, and
13 use that to question the validity of the whole G&T
14 model. I point out that almost every G&T program has
15 more demand than available seats. The classroom in
16 D-15 with 11 students was an exception. It's
17 important to ask if programs are being established in
18 areas where they are in demand, and if they are being
19 marketed and advertised widely. I know there are
20 many, many families in D-15 that want a G&T program,
21 but may not have been aware or close to this
22 particular program.

23 As for the admissions process, thanks to the DOE
24 for hearing the families that asked to modify
25 admissions policies for accelerated programs and move

2 away from lotteries. I like the third grade on-ramp
3 for GT . I like giving superintendents the
4 flexibility to program their districts but there's
5 room for improvement.

6 First, all the new admissions policies based on
7 grades and teacher evaluations are inherently subject
8 to human bias. The kindergarten G&T admission
9 requires a parent request their child be evaluated.
10 This will inherently favor parents who are in the
11 know or are motivated. Parents who are too busy or
12 otherwise not aware will not make the request. Their
13 kids will fall through the cracks. It is also a very
14 short timeframe to evaluate children, and the current
15 evaluation framework teachers used as bias towards
16 children who are more vocal at a young age. This
17 will surely exclude large numbers of quieter gifted
18 learners. And teachers are being asked to evaluate
19 kids on dozens of areas. Each teacher's methods will
20 vary widely. We especially need to consider that
21 many teachers may be ideologically opposed to Gifted
22 and Talented.

23 Second, there are also bias concerns in the use
24 of grades as a sole determinant for the third grade
25 G&T admissions and the middle school screened

2 admissions. If you care about equity, and we want to
3 address biases in the current policies, the DOE needs
4 to include some type of universal assessment in their
5 admissions policies. If grades are retained as part
6 of admissions, I suggest a method where you use the
7 grades above a given teachers historical grading
8 average. If a student achieves a certain percentage
9 level above of teachers average that will account for
10 teachers who are just stricter graders.

11 Finally, while I applaud the decision to allow
12 district superintendents to decide on Middle School
13 screened admissions, there will be situations in
14 which parents and superintendents disagree. It is a
15 very important decision and there needs to be a
16 feedback process. Engagement on the middle school
17 screening process varied widely by district. I want
18 to point out that simply engaging DOE staff such as
19 principals does not substitute for engaging parents
20 who are the most important stakeholders in this
21 decision. Superintendents must be inclusive of all
22 viewpoints in their community, not wedded to a
23 particular ideology they may have learned in graduate
24 school or their experience today.

2 This brings us to one of the most important areas
3 for reform the superintendent evaluation process.
4 Despite being enshrined in State Law 2590-E, the
5 current process is meaningless. CEC's submit an
6 annual superintendent evaluation but the DOE does not
7 provide responses or engage in discussions. There is
8 no incentive to. I encourage the City Council to
9 take up the issue of reform of the superintendent
10 evaluation process, as the debate over mayoral
11 control extension heats up again very soon. I happen
12 to think this is a rare area in which parents who
13 often disagree on education issues might actually be
14 able to find some common ground. Thank you.

15 COUNSEL: Thank you so much. Nyah Berg.

16 MS. BIRD: Hi, everyone. Thank you for the
17 opportunity to testify today. My name is Nyah Berg,
18 and I'm the Executive Director at New York Appleseed,
19 a nonprofit that advocates for integrated schools and
20 communities in New York City and State.

21 For years, the middle and high school admissions
22 process in New York City has been notoriously
23 cumbersome, stressful, and complex. The New York
24 city high school application process is not unlike
25 the process of applying to college. We ask students

2 and families to research a list of well over 100
3 schools. We ask them to narrow that down to 12
4 choices, by searching through an online platform,
5 maybe attending tours, figuring out open houses,
6 going to interviews, maybe sometimes submitting
7 auditions, sometimes writing multiple personal
8 essays. And for the best shot at several of the most
9 coveted schools, we require students to ensure that
10 they have at least a 90-or-above average from seventh
11 grade with few exceptions. And we ask them to do all
12 of these things with the expectation they can figure
13 out the system primarily in English, and with the aid
14 of a supposedly well-informed and supposedly
15 available counselor.

16 The high school application process, that's what
17 it is now, and this is-- is still leaps and bounds
18 better than what it was several years ago, thanks to
19 changes that were made in 2020, 2021, and that were
20 further sustained this year.

21 The middle school application process also was
22 made unnecessarily complex largely due to rampant use
23 of exclusive selection criteria that also saw
24 welcomed reform in 2020, with a two-year pause on
25 screening that led to increases in access for

2 marginalized students. These policy changes made
3 over the last three years serves important
4 prerequisites to building a more equitable and just
5 admissions process. And yet decisions made this year
6 did not sustain them all. One of the most egregious
7 reversals of policy was the reinstatement of
8 screening of public middle schools at the discretion
9 of district superintendents. Despite years of
10 advocacy, research, and reports demonstrating their
11 detrimental and segregative effect. It was also
12 concerning to hear the Chancellor defend his changes
13 through statements at an event such as, "If you have
14 a child who works really hard on the weekends and
15 puts in their time and energy and have a 98 average,
16 they should have a better opportunity to get into a
17 high-choice school than a child you have to throw
18 water on their face to get to school every day."
19 This callous reasoning behind changes that affects
20 hundreds of students and families was alarming. It
21 lacks empathy for the daily life of students. It
22 lacks an understanding of the influence systemic
23 inequities have on students in traditional measures
24 of achievement, and it lacks awareness that many of
25 our students are still reeling from trauma due to the

2 COVID 19 pandemic. All students, regardless of
3 income, language, race, ability or housing status
4 deserve the opportunity to thrive in high quality
5 public schools-- excuse me, high quality public
6 schools and our enrollment policies should reflect
7 that.

8 We've set aside a few recommendations we have
9 elaborated the with those in our written testimony
10 that would go to supporting under-resourced students
11 and families and the high school admissions process,
12 such as mandating funding to develop standardized
13 curriculums that would be integrated into middle
14 schools and to after school enrichment programs to
15 help families better-navigate the high school
16 application process, investing in guidance counselors
17 and professional development, making selection
18 criteria in print rather than just online, to have
19 better access to these platforms, and also to make
20 sure that we are implementing Local Law 225, which I
21 was thankful to the Council for asking questions
22 about today, as well as recommitting to the progress
23 of the over 60 goals that have been outlined. They
24 are still living on the website today in our

2 Diversity In Our Schools website page on the
3 Department of Education.

4 I'll wrap up with saying that segregation is an
5 intentional choice, and to dismantle it, we must be
6 just as intentional in our reforms. Our enrollment
7 policies matter and they can be catalysts for
8 integration or sustainers of segregation. We implore
9 leadership to continue to center equity, excellence
10 and diversity in policymaking to avoid the doomed
11 alternative of trying to create separate-but-equal
12 schools. Thank you for having this oversight hearing
13 today.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much for your
15 testimonies. Thank you.

16 COUNSEL: Thank you so much for this panel. We
17 will now move on to our final in-person panel,
18 Jennifer Choi, Zarith Pineda, and Ursula Zhang[ph].

19 Apologies if I mispronounced anything.

20 Jennifer, when you're ready, you may begin.

21 MS. CHOI: Yes. Okay. Thank you very much. My
22 name is Jennifer Choi. I am a Queens resident, a
23 parent of two high school students with IEPs, and a
24 special education advocate at special support
25 services. I am also the founder of a 700 member

2 group called New York City Parents of Teens with
3 Disabilities.

4 For students with disabilities, when it comes to
5 high school admissions, the DOE states, "Every DOE
6 middle school in high school welcomes and serves
7 students with disabilities according to their IEP s."
8 But what they don't state is that they will not
9 supervise the school open houses and tours, in which
10 parents are directly or indirectly told that the
11 school will only provide some, but not all, of these
12 services.

13 Some of the things that the parents will hear
14 things like, "Related services will have to be
15 provided outside of school," and this puts the onus
16 on the parent to ensure services. They'll hear, "We
17 do not offer integrated co-teaching," otherwise known
18 as ICT, a special education service for world
19 language classes, even though you need that to
20 graduate with a regents diploma. "There are no ICT
21 services for AP classes," is something that they will
22 hear, even though those classes are also used towards
23 completing a high school diploma. They are told that
24 there are no self-contained classes, which is very
25 bad considering that some of these schools are

2 specialized in offering career technical education
3 programs. Likewise, these schools will tell parents
4 that ICT services are not offered in career technical
5 education classes as well.

6 Some of the specialized high schools will take
7 weeks to respond to parents for simple special
8 education questions. And the parents take that delay
9 as, "Don't come here." Some will even tell parents
10 that they will amend the IEP to remove ICT from
11 their-- from the student, so that the student could
12 take an AP class, and that is against federal policy.

13 Also against federal policy is when a student
14 gets into a G&T school, and then upon arrival, they
15 will be asked to remove ICT off their IEP.

16 Some parents even hear that the school's
17 trajectory is to declassify the student towards the
18 end of high school, because there's no special
19 education in college. That's the reason. So this
20 tells parents what? That if they need to have
21 services in 12th grade, they shouldn't come to that
22 school.

23 What ends up happening after parents hear these
24 messages is what I call "self-serve discrimination,"
25 because the message is make parents choose other

2 schools so that these non-inclusive schools will
3 never be forced to provide the services -- [BELL
4 RINGS] I'm almost done -- to provide the services to
5 students with disabilities. Even if the parent is
6 willing to fight when they get in there that first
7 year, that student is at risk, obviously, because the
8 school is leaning towards not providing services, and
9 they made that clear.

10 I'm asking the Education Committee to please
11 investigate these matters, please ask high school
12 superintendents and the enrollment office if they
13 have been told about these activities, and what they
14 have done about it.

15 Please also read the Chalkbeat Article entitled
16 "Many high schools are off limits to students with
17 disabilities."

18 More importantly, please examine the schools who
19 are doing it right. Townsend Harris High School in
20 Queens is a model of top-level education in this
21 country. And it is also a model of Special Education
22 Support Services here in the city. They are proving
23 to the city that parents do not have to choose
24 between their child's education and their child's
25 disability supports.

2 The Queen's North High school superintendents
3 office also provides exemplary services to parents.
4 Both institutions look at special education more as a
5 point of excellence, rather than a miserable point of
6 compliance. This is what makes students feel safe
7 and included. There's more in my testimony, but I
8 know my time is up. Thank you

9 COUNSEL: Zarith Pineda.

10 MS. PINEDA: Thank you, Council. Thank you for
11 staying this late. My name is Zarith Pineda. I am
12 the Founder and Executive Director of Territorial
13 Empathy, the urban equity design collective. I'm
14 also an adjunct associate at Columbia University in
15 the applied analytics program in urban design. Also,
16 I've led the working group of the District 15
17 Diversity Plan where I worked on community
18 engagement, urban analytics, and policy design. For
19 the past six years of research school segregation in
20 New York City. My team created Segregation Is
21 Killing Us, the first investigation into disparate
22 casualties of COVID-19 in communities of color
23 throughout NYC, and a responsive high school
24 admissions policy to support these vulnerable
25 families, which I would love for the Council to look

2 into, because we provided this to the DOE. We
3 created it with IntegrateNYC. It was modeled by MIT,
4 and it proved incredible outcomes. It just there was
5 a failure of implementation with the new
6 administration, unfortunately.

7 It's also unfortunate that students and nonprofit
8 organizations have to come up with educational
9 policy.

10 We've also created the Real Integration Hub,
11 which you could find it IntegrationHub.NYC, the
12 city's first school integration archive, documenting
13 decades of activism policy and data in partnership
14 with the NYU Metro Center.

15 As someone who has worked on thoughtful
16 desegregation processes in the city, I know we can
17 and must do better than what the current Chancellor
18 and Mayor have proposed in terms of admissions and
19 funding policy. Accelerated learning academies are
20 not enough in and our long-term band aid to historic
21 and systemic policy errors.

22 As we continue to grapple with the impacts of the
23 pandemic, we must realize that black and brown
24 families have suffered disproportionately. In New
25 York City, you are two times more likely to be

2 infected and three times more likely to die if you
3 belong to any of these racial groups. Beyond these
4 mortality and morbidity casualties, these children
5 are facing bunch of wider educational gaps in all
6 subject areas.

7 Instituting policies that maintain or reverse the
8 progress and integration is pernicious and can have
9 irreparable and generational consequences.
10 Currently, 72% of DOE students live in poverty, and
11 104,000 of them are in temporary housing. And while
12 almost 70% of the students are BIPOC, identify as
13 BIPOC, only 7% of schools have Diversity in
14 Admissions Programs. And to contradict what-- the
15 DOE folks, they do-- we monitor them and that's
16 available on the real IntegrationHub, and they do--
17 they do not meet the targets set forward. Only--
18 these 212 programs only exist in 138 schools, which
19 is egregious, since the DOE has almost 2000 schools.
20 While some groups are threatened by these
21 initiatives, these DIA initiatives, and cite a mass
22 exodus of students from the system, an analysis of
23 data spanning the last five school years shows us
24 that it is the most vulnerable families making that
25 difficult choice. We have seen a 13% decrease in

2 poor students, a 14% decrease in black students, and
3 yet we have a 6% increase on students not in poverty.
4 I think it's worth noting that Brooklyn has lost a
5 record 17,000 black students. This system is failing
6 that and BIPOC families. Currently we are noticing
7 these disastrous impacts in districts 12 and 18,
8 mostly where there's been a 23% drop in the student
9 body.

10 In closing, I'd like to share some of the data
11 outcomes of the District 15 diversity plan which we
12 do have, and more outcomes are being released soon.

13 The plan removes screens, as you all know, and
14 created a priority for, FRL, ELL, and STL students.
15 And this is what we found: There was no white
16 flight. In fact, there was a-- an increase in white
17 and Asian families enrolling in the district and
18 improved racial and socioeconomic diversity and an
19 increased first choice match.

20 Do not be afraid of the loud voices disparaging
21 these efforts. It is high time the most diverse city
22 in the world stopped having one of the most
23 segregated school districts in the country.

24 There are community groups educators, families,
25 students and researchers that have developed proven

2 policy alternatives. I ask that you create the space
3 and the time to meaningfully engage them. Thank you.

4 COUNSEL: Thank you so much. Ursula?

5 MS. ZHANG[PH]: I'm going to make myself very
6 popular by keeping this short, since I'm the last one
7 to go. My name is Ursula, and I am a member on CEC-
8 3.

9 I'm here to speak against the lack of objective
10 measures in assessing students across the board in
11 New York City Public Schools, and in particular for
12 admissions to screened programs, which were
13 referenced a lot by various Councilmembers,
14 especially on this side of the room, I felt. The
15 demand for these type of programs we know far exceeds
16 the supply of seats, and perhaps expanding them as
17 the solution to the shocking enrollment decline that
18 we're seeing across the city.

19 Objective type exams administered under
20 controlled conditions with well-defined criteria are
21 generally more reliable indicators of performance.
22 These tests are not colored by a teacher's
23 preconceptions of a student and cannot influence
24 marking. They allow educators to compare students'
25 knowledge and identify learning gaps. Chair Joseph,

2 as a former educator, you're well-aware that in New
3 York City, we've been seeing rampant grade inflation
4 over the past decade plus, which means that our
5 children's grades -- and I have two children -- do
6 not reflect necessarily what New York City students
7 continue to learn in both math and reading. This is
8 compared to students across the state as well as
9 across the country. This tactic is being used to
10 cover underperformance by New York City schools.

11 Over the past two years, middle school and high
12 school admissions based on school grades alone have
13 resulted in a wide range of abilities across
14 classrooms that we cannot fairly expect teachers to
15 address in an adequate manner, not to mention the
16 fact that this is harming students across the board,
17 both those who can do more accelerated work as well
18 as those who are unable to keep pace.

19 At the kindergarten level, the DOE has not
20 announced any criteria for identifying eligible
21 students for accelerated programs. Even as parents
22 are told they can choose them on the application,
23 there is a lack of clear criteria, when they will be
24 announced or who might qualify.

2 In a process that many parents view as fraught
3 already, though I strongly believe that it would not
4 be if we had more quality schools that we could apply
5 to, this is causing even more stress.

6 I urge you to consider the widespread adoption of
7 objective testing and other measures so that we can
8 identify learning gaps, ensure educational integrity,
9 and help raise the standards of students across New
10 York City.

11 I get the prize for finishing under the clock
12 today.

13 [LAUGHTER]

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you for your
15 testimony.

16 COUNSEL: Thank you so much to all of our in-
17 person panelists. If there's anybody else in the
18 room who wishes to testify, please make your way to
19 the Sergeant At Arms desk.

20 Okay, if not, we're going to move on to our
21 virtual panelists.

22 As a reminder, please wait for the Sergeant At
23 Arms to give you a go-ahead before your testimony.

24 Our first virtual panel will be Kulsoom Tapal,
25 Ellen McHugh, Jenna Provenzano. Kulsoom Tapal.

2 MS. TAPAL: Hi, everyone. Thank you so much for
3 giving me the opportunity to testify. My name is
4 Kulsoom Tapal, and I'm the Education Policy
5 Coordinator representing the Coalition for Asian
6 American Children and Families, otherwise known as
7 CACF. We're the nation's only pan-Asian children and
8 families advocacy organization, bringing together
9 community partners and youth to fight for equity for
10 Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. Exclusion
11 from curriculum has contributed to long standing
12 erasure, and is a root cause of violence and
13 harassment towards AAPI people. The historic and
14 present erasure has created a seemingly endless cycle
15 of violence and anti-Asian hate incidents both inside
16 and outside the classroom. In 2020, Stop AAPI Hate
17 found that one-in-four Asian youths experience racist
18 bullying in schools. Infusing AAPI curricular
19 materials in schools is one crucial way we can
20 address racially charged bullying while combating
21 ignorance around AAPI communities that leads to hate,
22 as it can be helpful in dispelling myths, addressing
23 stereotypes and preventing misunderstandings that can
24 create animosity between students. As advocates for
25 the most marginalized Asian American students,

2 English language learners, immigrants, low income
3 students, and students with disabilities. CACF sees
4 an urgent need for meaningful school admission--
5 school admissions reform that accounts for the
6 barriers these students face, alongside in-language
7 culturally responsive outreach to underserved
8 communities.

9 New York City schools are the most segregated in
10 the US, as we've heard today. So it's imperative
11 that this taskforce addresses this complex issue with
12 a multi-pronged approach. As such, we emphasize that
13 the task force-- the anti-bullying task force must
14 (1) include representation from the AAPI community,
15 (2) consider AAPI curricula as a solution to
16 preventing bullying, and (3) mandate reporting of
17 disaggregated data on bullying that students of color
18 face in New York City Public Schools.

19 Additionally, we also ask the Department of
20 Education (1) to present disaggregated admissions
21 data for AAPI students and (2) commit to admissions
22 integration and providing accessible resources in
23 language to support AAPI families.

24 Thank you.

25 COUNSEL: Ellen McHugh?

2 Hello. Good afternoon, and thank you for the
3 opportunity to speak today. I especially like to
4 thank Chairperson Joseph for her comments about
5 individuals who have disabilities and her questions.
6 They were long questions quickly answered, but I
7 think a good deal of information about how people
8 perceive students with disabilities. I am a parent
9 of a child who is deaf. Part of his-- part of my
10 support is we're supporting the anti-bullying
11 curriculum that-- that has been mentioned. Bullying
12 occurs, of course, we know in many, many ways. When
13 my son was learning sign language, a teacher in his
14 school made a crack, that it would be really great
15 for him to start to learn sign language because
16 everybody would think he was Italian, and he'd fit
17 in. It took me a good 5 to 10 minutes to just absorb
18 the double discrepancy in her comments, and the idea
19 that she could be so cruel to both my son, who is
20 deaf, and to people who have a certain ethnic
21 background. It was one of the few times that I was
22 really relieved that my son could not hear an adult
23 speak.

24 We have-- I sit on the Citywide Council on
25 Special Education. This is my testimony only. I

2 have not gotten any information from other members,
3 and I'm sure if they will submit their own testimony,
4 if not publicly testify today.

5 But one of the issues, of course, is access. For
6 individuals with disabilities. It's not just access
7 to the building. It's access to the programs. In
8 many cases staff at schools where children aren't
9 currently sited, or staff at schools where children
10 are applying to make a broad assumption that
11 individuals with IEPs cannot be considered to be
12 Gifted and Talented or colloquially known as 2E[ph]
13 kids.

14 I would urge the Council to ask for information
15 from all of these schools -- not just the schools
16 that have Gifted and Talented programs -- about the
17 ratios of representation for all students with
18 disabilities, because at this point in time, we have
19 a confused education system. We have students who
20 are district level-- receiving district level
21 services and can be considered as district level kids
22 with special needs. And we have students who receive
23 services from citywide programs and can be considered
24 as non-residents of the school where they are cited,
25 unless they are in a self-contained building that

2 serves only students who are classified as district
3 75 eligible. [BELL RINGS]

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

5 MS. MCHUGH: Thank you for your note-- thank you--
6 - on the time limit. Thank you for your time. My
7 written presentation will be sent in within the 72
8 hours. Thank you.

9 COUNSEL: Thank you so much. Before our last
10 person on this panel, our following panel will be
11 Lupe Hernandez, Casey Cohen, and Chen Kwok. So Jenna
12 Provenzano?

13 Good afternoon and thank you for having me. My
14 name is Jenna Provenzano, and I am a Youth Transition
15 Specialist as the Center for Independence of the
16 Disabled, CIDNY. CIDNY's mission is to ensure full
17 integration, independence, and equal opportunity for
18 all people with disabilities by removing barriers to
19 social, economic, cultural, and civic life of the
20 community. Today, CIDNY joins here as an advocate in
21 support of establishment of an anti-bullying
22 taskforce in New York City schools, as outlined in
23 IMT 0038.

24 The New York City Department of Education is one
25 of the largest public school systems in the nation,

2 and serves students representing race, genders,
3 national origin, sexual orientation, socioeconomic
4 status, and disability. Historically, differences
5 across these kinds of groups have been known to cause
6 feelings of otherness and lead to increased
7 opportunity for bullying. Recent data indicates that
8 these have made increase incidents of bullying in New
9 York City schools. Owing to the social isolation of
10 students experienced during the period of school
11 closures. Furthermore, students with disabilities
12 are more likely to be victims of bullying, because of
13 behaviors stemming from their disabilities, and that
14 they are often a response to unmet special education
15 needs. Students who are bullied may suffer long term
16 effects that interfere with their daily lives or
17 social-emotional state. Bullying and otherness and
18 key contributors to stigma surrounding marginalized
19 groups, especially those with disabilities. This
20 stigma often leads to negative self-identification
21 for students with disabilities. In some cases,
22 stigma leaves children and families to avoid
23 disability diagnosis as a means of avoiding the
24 negative social ramification, which also limits the
25 scope of their services and supports that students

2 ultimately, resulting in less-desirable academic
3 outcomes. Along with this, some other long-term
4 effects of falling can prompt disability anxiety and
5 depression, and this has the threat of potential
6 physical injury.

7 All students should feel safe in school. In
8 fact, some students have the right to attend a school
9 where they are safe and supported and that there is
10 no bullying, harassment, or discrimination. Bullying
11 of students because of their disability can also be a
12 violation of their rights under the law of free and
13 appropriate public education. CIDNY advocates for
14 this right to safe, equitable, accessible, and
15 socially fulfilling education for all students with
16 disabilities. And we believe that the implication of
17 IMTs are-- [BELL RINGS]

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

19 MS. PROVENZANO: Okay. My time's up?

20 COUNSEL: You can continue.

21 MS. PROVENZANO: Okay. There are three key steps
22 towards this. There should be a taskforce to
23 carefully examine disability-related billing
24 prevention protocols. The proposed task force in the
25 bill would better support current policies through

2 the important reinforcement of the conflict
3 resolution, experts in bullying prevention, mental
4 health counselors, and other school safety education.

5 However, in addition, these initiatives CIDNY is
6 advocating for the disability literacy to be included
7 in the school and the safety education. Students
8 with disabilities are more often targeted for
9 bullying than other students and CIDNY believes that
10 understanding and addressing these reasons why this
11 is the case for the first step in towards generating
12 effective prevention efforts. The increased of
13 bullying in schools and believes that timing of the
14 implementation of task force is crucial and plays
15 supports the initiatives that protect our most
16 marginalized students. CIDNY is also testifying
17 today to indicate our support for providing the
18 bicycle safety and schools for resolution. CIDNY has
19 been pursuing advocacy efforts to make New York City
20 streets and sidewalks safer for all regarding the
21 recreational use of bicycles or e-bikes, which have
22 become a major safety issue with people for
23 disabilities. We firmly support these efforts to
24 address the important safety concern and are glad to
25 learn the resolutions and the positive changes in

2 aims to achieve in cycling safety at the school
3 level.

4 Thank you. And thank you for the extended time.
5 And I'll submit their written version in 72 hours.

6 COUNSEL: Thank you so much for your testimony,
7 and thank you to everybody on the panel. Before we
8 move on to the next panel-- panel, just as a
9 reminder, if you haven't done so you can email your
10 testimony to the email provided in the invite, and
11 it's also on the Council website.

12 Our next panel will be Lupe Hernandez, Casey
13 Cohn, and Chien Kwok, followed by a third panel,
14 Nikos Papageorgiou, Gavin Healy, and Derek Tan. Lupe
15 Hernandez?

16 Hi. Thank you so much, Chair and Councilmembers
17 that are still here. And I want to uplift a lot what
18 was said before me. My name is Lupe Hernandez. I am
19 one of the Borough President appointees on the
20 Community Education Council for District 2. But
21 today's speaking in testimony will be on behalf of
22 myself as a parent, an NYC parent. I have a fourth
23 grader at my local zone school in an ICT classroom
24 with 100% para, one-on-one. He is on the autism
25 spectrum. He has been in the DOE since early

2 intervention, diagnosed at a really early age. And
3 I've spent the past seven years advocating for him in
4 the Department of Education. And I thank you all who
5 have heard me speak on behalf of students with
6 disabilities and the many plights that the system has
7 caused for families bearing the impact and the weight
8 of trying to get what is legally barely mandated for
9 our students.

10 But today, I am here to really uplift the
11 admissions that we're speaking about. I am also a
12 parent of a three year old. He just turned three
13 this month. And I could tell you from experience,
14 that I was devastated to hear the break in promise of
15 universal 3-K, for all. But I can't tell you how
16 more infuriated I am, being that I live in this
17 space-- in this education space as an advocate. I
18 sit on the Council. I've worked with the Enrollment
19 Office, and I want to thank them for a lot of the
20 data that they helped in the engagement process of
21 our middle school admissions for District 2.

22 However, as a parent going through trying to get
23 the application for 3-K, it's interesting that I had
24 to find out from this hearing, from enrollment, that
25 the application went live. I'm on the email listserv

2 that is supposed to be providing parents all the
3 information. I greatly appreciate the specifications
4 of the different programs available to parents. But
5 the fact that we've had zero dates of when this
6 application was going to go live, and when that was
7 going to close.

8 We talk about uplifting 3-K, or why these seats
9 are empty. I want to tell you why they're empty.
10 They're empty because there's zero outreach going on
11 for the past year and a half. And I say the past
12 year and a half, because I know families that got
13 into even Early Learn through outreach in their
14 districts. And let me tell you, I just found out
15 that I've qualified for Early Learn for the past
16 year. I've been trying to look for work. But
17 childcare has been the biggest hindrance in that.
18 And to find out from a provider, mind you, because
19 the DOE's website-- [BELL RINGS]

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

21 MS. HERNANDEZ: May I please continue just--

22 COUNSEL: Yes, you may continue.

23 MS. HERNANDEZ: Thank you. The MySchools app--
24 And like I said, I live in this space. So imagine
25 parents that don't have the time the energy or the

2 resources nor speak this-- English as a native
3 language. But I've been on top of DOE. I speak to
4 my superintendent. No information-- it was-- as far
5 as calendar events, everything that they spoke about
6 at this hearing earlier today, it was information
7 coming January 2023 for 3-K and pre-K.

8 Yet these are the seats that are being
9 threatened. These are the seats that they claim are
10 not being filled. They're not being filled, because
11 a parent like myself, that, for the past year, I have
12 emailed CC applications regarding early learn, which
13 is the extended day and extended learn as a 3-K,
14 which is only eligible to specific families that meet
15 an income threshold that is not advertised or not
16 posted anywhere. So I'm finding out yesterday. I
17 only found out because the CC applications after
18 several emails finally got back to me and said they
19 gave me 3-K information. Oh, it's going to go live
20 sometime this week. I said I don't want 3-K. That's
21 September 2023. I need something now. There are
22 families, and there are seats available. There are
23 seats available. But how are families supposed to
24 utilize them if there's zero outreach going on? And
25 they don't make it easy. It's not. I had to find

2 out from this hearing that the application was live?
3 That's absurd. Come on.

4 Forums are not until tomorrow and next week, yet
5 the application is already live. And I get that it's
6 not first-come, first-serve. But middle schools,
7 high school applications, even kindergarten
8 applications got information in a timely manner. You
9 knew well in advance when the application was going
10 to go live. And the fact that there's zero
11 information on how to access these early education
12 seats that are empty for families that actually are
13 eligible for them, but there's no way to get access
14 to it, is ridiculous. There needs to be more
15 transparency in that, and it shouldn't take years of
16 emails not being responded to, and finally getting a
17 response this week, only because they thought they
18 could answer we meet with the generic 3-K email that
19 I got last Friday from the email subscription that
20 didn't-- didn't state today was the day the
21 application was going to go to live.

22 Yeah-- I-- there's a lot more and I will send
23 you my written testimony regarding G&T, and middle
24 school and high school admissions, and the impact on

2 students with disabilities, students in temporary
3 housing, multi-language learners.

4 And I beg you to take a look at the fact that
5 there really-- there are there are families that need
6 those 3-K seats, and they need to get that
7 information out to the families. This-- it's not
8 working. I can tell you firsthand and I live in this
9 space, it's not working. Thank you.

10 COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony. Before
11 moving on, there are two Chien Kwoks logged onto the
12 zoom. If you could please just log on once, so we
13 know who to unmute. And if these are two different
14 people could you please email your name to
15 testimony@counsel.nyc.gov for the second Chien Kwok,
16 if it's somebody different.

17 Moving on to our next panelists. Casey Cohn?

18 MS. COHN: Can you hear me?

19 COUNSEL: Yes.

20 MS. COHN: Okay. I have a student in third grade
21 at a Gifted and Talented elementary school and a
22 student in seventh grade at a large zoned middle
23 school, both in Manhattan District 2. I support the
24 return of screened admissions to some middle schools

25

2 without leaving that decision in our superintendents'
3 discretion.

4 A screened middle school would have better served
5 my seventh graders academic needs, and I would like
6 my third grader to have the choice to apply to
7 screened middle schools. I also request the
8 immediate creation of accelerated classes in
9 additional subjects in zoned middle schools. Our
10 school offers accelerated math in sixth and seventh
11 grade, but nothing for students who need more
12 challenge in other subjects. This year, all of the
13 parents elected members of our school leadership team
14 have asked the school to create an honors ELA class,
15 but our District 2 Superintendent has refused to
16 allow it. That is not listening to and incorporating
17 community feedback.

18 I'm not alone in these opinions. Not every
19 parent wants these options, but many do, and there's
20 no reason we can't offer choices that appeal to
21 everyone. Instead, we're allowing extremists to
22 drive families who want their children taught in
23 ability-grouped middle school classes out of the
24 public school system.

2 Before screened schools were eliminated, most of
3 the families at our G&T elementary chose public
4 middle schools. The year screens were eliminated,
5 were eliminated, about half the families we knew
6 either moved to private school or left New York City
7 altogether for middle school. This year, I believe
8 about two thirds of the school's families will exit
9 the public school system for middle school.

10 These parents aren't racist. Most of us chose
11 public school in the first place because we value
12 diversity. But fast learners need accelerated
13 schools and classes, and if forced to choose between
14 a diverse New York City public school that does not
15 meet our kids academic needs, and a private or
16 suburban school that does, most parents are choosing
17 the latter if they can.

18 And it isn't just gifted students being chased
19 out of the public school system. Our good friends
20 pulled their sixth grader out of a small middle
21 school that, under screening, had been known for
22 working well with students with learning differences
23 which he has. But the lottery placed a number of
24 advanced learners there, and his parents didn't want

2 him targeted when these students were frustrated with
3 him for holding them back.

4 Other friends with a shy daughter who performed
5 in the middle of her elementary school class just
6 bought a house in Westchester because they fear she
7 will be lost in a middle school class with students
8 performing at so many different levels.

9 Not everybody personally likes screen schools for
10 ability group classes, but many of the people who
11 each of you--

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

13 MS. COHN: -- but many of the people who each of
14 you is supposed to represent do, and providing those
15 choices doesn't require you or anyone else to choose
16 them. If you care about families returning to the
17 public school system, if you want families to feel
18 like they have a viable public school option in New
19 York City, please give us the choices we're asking
20 for. Thank you very much.

21 COUNSEL: Thank you very much. Chien Kwok?

22 MR. KWOK: Hi, can you hear me? Yes. Thank you
23 very much. Thank you, Chair Joseph and members of
24 the Committee. My name is Chien Kwok, and I am the
25 parent of two New York City government school

2 students. I'm a parent-elected member of CC District
3 2. My comments are my own, and I just want to
4 highlight. Thank you for staying Chair Joseph, but I
5 really find it disrespectful that parents are facing
6 an empty chamber without any committee members, and
7 we're forced to speak around pickup time and not
8 allowed to use the full day. I hope that in the
9 future, we can-- you know, the Committee could be
10 more respectful to parents and prioritize us to speak
11 above, you know, professional, nonprofit executives
12 and activists.

13 My testimony is that one educational goal that I
14 haven't heard mentioned today from any elected and
15 DOE officials is academic excellence.

16 Only 30% of Black and Hispanic students are at
17 grade level proficiency, and students are being
18 allowed to graduate from high school below grade
19 level, which sets them up for failure in future
20 education and careers. At the same time, high-
21 achieving students who are in every neighborhood in
22 every borough are not being supported.

23 The singular focus of elected officials and DOE
24 leadership need to be on improving academic
25 achievement for all students. A lot of admissions

2 are useful when there are ties between students with
3 similar qualifications. Otherwise, lotteries are
4 antithetical to academic achievement. We rightfully
5 have screening for special needs and IEPs English
6 language learners, and now for dyslexia, to provide
7 the appropriate support for the learning needs of the
8 student populations.

9 But why do elected officials and Chancellor Banks
10 ignore students with advanced learning needs,
11 including twice exceptional students, and especially
12 those from low-income disadvantaged homes? There was
13 a time when gifted and academically matched programs
14 were in most schools across New York City. One
15 outcome which SDAG conveniently ignores was Brooklyn
16 Temple High School, a specialized high school and the
17 largest high school in the country, having more than
18 50% Black and Hispanic students for more than 20
19 consecutive years. These programs were killed off
20 over the past 25 years, and we see the negative
21 consequences today. A lot of admissions put high-
22 achieving students in classrooms with other students
23 who may have a two to three year grade level
24 difference, a classroom filled by lottery students
25 with only one teacher means the teacher will always

2 focus his or her time on the students who are below
3 grade level, leaving the high-achieving students to
4 his or her own devices. High-achieving students will
5 not quote unquote, "be fine." High-achieving
6 students who are not supported often display
7 disruptive behavior, depression, and loss of
8 motivation. Lotteries also invalidates and
9 disrespects the efforts by students who have
10 demonstrated academic achievement through the efforts
11 in overcoming hardships and challenges. Students who
12 lost the lottery of being born into wealthy families
13 with supportive parents should not be subjected to
14 yet another lottery for education. We need more
15 academically matched classrooms and every school in
16 every neighborhood across the city--

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

18 MR. KWOK: -- because high achieving students are
19 everywhere and need to be supported. Please stop
20 ignoring them and wasting their potential. Thank
21 you.

22 COUNSEL: Thank you so much, and thank you to
23 everybody on the panel. We will now hear from our
24 final panel. Nikos Papageorgiou, Gavin Healy, Derek
25 Tan, and Maud Maron.

2 MR. PAPAGEORGIOU: Can you hear me?

3 COUNSEL: Yes.

4 MR. PAPAGEORGIOU: Thank you. I believe that the
5 new admissions process are a disaster. I did not
6 elect Mayor Adams or you guys so superintendent
7 McGuire can implement his personal plan for D-2, that
8 unlike most districts, include zero screened middle
9 school seats, and in addition has not planned for
10 honor CLA.

11 I elected you so that the Chancellor directs Mr.
12 McGuire what to do based on the Mayor's excellence-
13 driven promises, and have Mr. McGuire execute. It is
14 unbelievable to me that the Chancellor allowed the
15 superintendents to do whatever they wanted after
16 listening to the parents. Why? The parents have
17 already spoken by electing the Mayor and you guys for
18 your excellence-driven educational initiatives. All
19 parents want the exact same thing: decent
20 neighborhood schools and options to address every
21 kid's educational needs, low and high, from the
22 underperformance to ELL, ICT, to the overperformance
23 It's not rocket science. Many of the DOE keep
24 talking like school integration is the most important
25 issue for all families. However, during his November

2 17 Washington Post interview, Chancellor Banks said
3 the following, and I quote, "When I talk to families
4 across the city, black families, nobody ever talks to
5 me about integrated schools. Not even once. It is
6 not what they talk about."

7 I guess for one more time, the DOE administrators
8 know better what the family priorities of the black
9 families are than the black families themselves. I
10 find this insulting and so should you. Mr. McGuire
11 might have great intentions, but unfortunately, as
12 they say, the road to hell is paved with great
13 intentions. Mr. McGuire's misguided educational
14 opinions are driven by social justice and not
15 excellence. So he suffers from selective hearing
16 when it comes to listening to the parents.
17 Therefore, the Chancellor's plan is no good, as he
18 cannot be driven by consensus. I'm asking the
19 captain of the DOEC, Chancellor Banks, to come up
20 with a uniform best practices plan for all schools,
21 in all districts driven by, as promised, excellence
22 and not people's unfounded beliefs and feelings.
23 Excellence in education needs to be rewarded again,
24 and not be frowned upon as a measure of privilege.
25 We need to stop taking the overperformers educational

2 boxes as so vividly illustrated by the famous--
3 [crosstalk]

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

5 MR. PAPAGEORGIU: -- It works in minor league
6 baseball games, but not in education. Please give me
7 20 more seconds. This excellence-driven uniform plan
8 should include but not limited to [inaudible] and
9 screen schools as a percentage of the district
10 students. A 10% number sounds fair to me.

11 Accelerated classes in math and ELA in every school
12 and every grade. Same district priority in all
13 districts, and a reasonable number of DIA seats per
14 school. 10% sounds fair to me, and not as an
15 example, and infuriating 50%-- 50% currently at
16 Eleanor Roosevelt High School. Thank you very much.

17 My name is Nikos Papageorgiou, and I'm the father
18 of a Bronx Science High School and a Wagner Middle
19 School senior.

20 COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony. Gavin
21 Healy?

22 MR. HEALY: Good afternoon. Can you hear me?

23 COUNSEL: Yes.

24 MS. HEALY: Thank you. Thank you, Chair Joseph.
25 Thank you for this opportunity to speak. First of

2 all, I want to comment on the DOE Director of
3 Enrollment's remark that PlaceNYC is an organization
4 that DOE has partnered with on outreach. This is an
5 organization founded and led by some virulently
6 transphobic people, and their vicious anti-trans
7 activism is well documented. That the DOE would
8 partner with such a group is an affront to the LGBTQ-
9 - LGBTQ community, and calls into question the DOE's
10 commitment to the safety and well-being of its LGBTQ
11 students.

12 One of my long running frustrations with our
13 system is how we spend so much time in CEC meetings,
14 in Chancellor's townhalls, and in hearings like this
15 one, talking about how to rank and sort kids, while
16 we seem to spend far less time talking about how to
17 actually educate them.

18 Personally, as the parent of a fifth grader who
19 just submitted a middle school application, I'm in
20 full support of the elimination of admission
21 screening for middle schools and high schools. My
22 child attends a school in District 2, where after a
23 thorough and thoughtful process of multilingual
24 community engagement, our district superintendent
25 Kelly McGuire made the decision to eliminate Middle

2 School Admission screens. This was a huge relief to
3 my family. And this thoughtful process of community
4 engagement by our superintendent was especially
5 important, when many of our CEC members in District
6 2, including the President and Vice President of the
7 Council, regularly treat families who come to CEC
8 meetings with bias and abuse, particularly directed
9 to those of us who are parents of students with
10 disabilities, leaving many of us fearful of bringing
11 our concerns to our CEC representatives, and making a
12 mockery of the Chancellor's pillar of community
13 engagement.

14 As the parent of a smart, curious, and
15 hardworking fifth grader who happens to have an IEP,
16 I'm already worn out by going through assistive
17 technology evaluations, neuropsych assessments, and
18 all the other hoops the DOE makes us jump through to
19 get services. So the elimination of middle school
20 screens in District 2 saved us a tremendous-- a
21 tremendous amount of time and stress, and I'm
22 grateful for that. I believe that the DOE should
23 follow this lead and eliminate admission screens
24 across the board.

2 Kids apply to middle school in the fifth grade
3 when they're just 9 or 10 years old. They shouldn't
4 be subjected to a competitive admissions process that
5 separates them into rigid boxes at that age,
6 especially when you see how admission screens have
7 contributed to the segregation of our schools by
8 race, and socioeconomic status.

9 Also, when we've seen how screen schools have
10 done such a poor job of supporting English language
11 learners --

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you. Time has expired.

13 MR. HEALY: Sorry. I'm just about to wrap it.
14 Thank you. -- and students with disabilities like my
15 child. I think we need to reconsider what we mean by
16 a successful school. Is a public school really
17 successful if it screens out most of the public?
18 It's discouraging to see our school system time and
19 again take the easy road of exclusion, rather than
20 the hard path to true inclusive excellence. Please,
21 let's eliminate admission screens once and for all.
22 They're a deeply regressive tax on New York City
23 families.

24 Thank you for this opportunity to speak.

2 COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony. Next,
3 we'll hear from Derek Tan.

4 MR. TAN: Thank you. Thank you for the
5 opportunity. And thank you Chair Joseph for staying.
6 My name is Derek Tan. I'm the proud parent of two
7 children who attend public schools in District 2.
8 I'm also the proud product of a public school
9 education myself. And in addition, I've been an
10 educator for 20 years, having served for the last 10
11 As the director of the graduate program that is
12 widely considered to be one of the top in its field.

13 Our program also has a strong and visible
14 commitment to promoting diversity, equity, and
15 inclusion through targeted recruitment efforts,
16 innovative programming and policies and hard work.
17 As a result, we have a strong track record of
18 recruiting and training students from diverse and
19 underserved backgrounds. For example, our program
20 includes students from federally designated
21 underrepresented minority groups at levels that are
22 double the national average. These students are
23 leaders in the field, and have gone on to successful
24 careers across the nation and around the world.

2 It's with this perspective that I must express
3 grave concern about the Diversity in Admissions
4 policy for high schools specifically in District 2.

5 While well intentioned, this is an ill-conceived
6 policy that will ultimately harm all students in
7 District 2. The policy has an obvious fatal flaw
8 that will drastically damage our schools, in the
9 process undermining the goals of the policy itself.

10 Because of its astoundingly large quarters with
11 up to 75% of seats at some District 2 schools
12 reserved for low-income student, this policy unfairly
13 penalizes middle class students who are high
14 performing, but do not qualify for free or reduced
15 price lunch. Families who are unable to obtain
16 appropriate high school placements for their children
17 based on merit will then leave the public school
18 system. As a result, District 2 will lose financial
19 support based on enrollment, tax dollars, and direct
20 donations. This will lead to an irreversible death
21 spiral for our public schools. From my two decades
22 of experience as an educator, I know well that there
23 are students from underserved backgrounds who have
24 tremendous potential, and I have implemented holistic
25

2 admissions policies effectively and fairly to serve
3 those students.

4 In contrast, the massive quotas that District 2
5 has implemented are unfair, ineffective, naive, and
6 with all due respect, intellectually lazy. I urge
7 DOE in the strongest terms to discontinue this
8 harmful policy immediately. Instead, seek out other
9 creative, effective, and equitable solutions to
10 improve public school education for all students in
11 District 2 and across New York City.

12 Thank you very much for your time.

13 COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony. Our last
14 witness is Maud Maron.

15 MS. MARON: Thank you very much. Can you hear
16 me?

17 COUNSEL: Yes, we hear you.

18 MS. MARON: My name is Maud Maron, and I am the
19 parent of four children in New York City Public
20 Schools. I have served on the school leadership
21 teams and parent associations of my children's
22 elementary, middle, and high schools. I am the past
23 president of CEC District 2, and I'm also the CO
24 president of the education advocacy organization
25 PlaceNYC, which is a collective of elected parent

2 leaders dedicated to improving academic standards and
3 curriculum for all New York City public students in
4 all our public schools. I'm speaking now as a public
5 school mom.

6 New York City DOE managed schools have
7 hemorrhaged enrollment in the past three years, with
8 more than 10% of our student population exiting the
9 system. While COVID and school closures undoubtedly
10 had an impact, the declining enrollment cannot be
11 chalked up to the pandemic because parochial,
12 charter, and private schools in our city saw an
13 increase in applications during the same period.

14 The changes in admissions played an outsized role
15 in the departures. Parents are frustrated with
16 lowered standards and the anti-merit admissions
17 policies affecting over 150,000 students in fifth and
18 eighth grade each year, and an admissions process
19 that is confusing and chaotic.

20 My three eldest children are class of 2024, 2026,
21 and 2028, and the application process for all three,
22 for middle school, and for two high school
23 application seasons changed dramatically for each
24 child, each time, all in the service of ever-elusive
25 and constantly changing equity goals, and never with

2 the results of making our schools more rigorous or
3 our students better educated. Merit and talent-based
4 admissions help create some of New York City's best
5 public schools that have successfully educated
6 generations of New Yorkers.

7 Members of this committee should stand with
8 parents who have repeatedly asked the DOE to reject
9 the lowering of standards in the name of equity, and
10 instead create true equity for public school students
11 by providing rigorous academics, accelerated
12 curriculum, and merit-based admissions, which allow
13 all children to reach their highest potential. Thank
14 you.

15 COUNSEL: Thank you so much, and thank you to
16 everybody on the panel. This concludes our virtual
17 testimony. If there's anybody else who is on Zoom,
18 who would like to testify if you could please use the
19 raise hand feature.

20 Thank you so much. I'm not seeing any hands.
21 And that is all.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you all. This
23 concludes our hearing. Thank you.

24 [GAVEL]

25

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 01/31/2023