

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON WOMEN
AND GENDER EQUITY

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September 10, 2020
Start: 10:11 a.m.
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HELD AT: Remote Hearing

B E F O R E: INEZ BARRON
Chairperson

HELEN ROSENTHAL
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Ydanis Rodriguez
Eric A. Ulrich
Laurie A. Cumbo
Alan N. Maisel
Ben Kallos
Diana Ayala
Brad Lander

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

Sherry Cleary, University Dean of Early
Childhood Initiatives
CUNY

Keisha Fuentes, University Manager of
Childcare and Leadership Programs
CUNY

Juwanie Piquant, Student Senate
CUNY University

Amber Rivero, President
John Jay College student Council

2
3 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS MARTINEZ: Sergeants, you
4 can begin your recordings. Mr. Hope, Sergeant Hope,
5 we are ready. You may go ahead. Thank you.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Once again,
7 good morning and welcome to the New York City Council
8 remote hearing on the Committee on Higher Education
9 jointly with the Committee on Women and Gender
10 Equity. At this time, would all Council members and
11 counsel staff please turn on your videos? Thank you.
12 To minimize disruption, please place all electronic
13 devices to vibrate or silent mode. If you wish to
14 submit testimony, you may do so at
15 testimony@council.nyc.gov. I repeat.
16 Testimony@council.NYC.gov. Chairs, we are ready to
17 begin.

18 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: I've got my shaker
19 out. Good morning and welcome to today's virtual
20 oversight hearing on child care services at City
21 University of New York in the wake of COVID-19. I'm
22 Council member Inez Barron, Chair of the Committee on
23 Higher Education and a proud CUNY alum. Thank you,
24 Council member Helen Rosenthal, Chair of the
25 Committee on Women and Gender Equity for joining us

2 to hold this very important hearing. And before I
3 get into today's topic, I just want to say that, yes,
4 we are still in the midst of this virus, this
5 pandemic and I want to urge everyone to take all
6 necessary precautions. And as we are looking at CUNY
7 as a tool for helping people to get through this
8 COVID crisis, and come out on the other side, I am,
9 again, urging the Board of Trustees, do not impose
10 the additional fee, health and wellness fee, on
11 students at this time. They're already overburdened
12 and we are hoping that you will not vote to implement
13 this fee which you had decided that you would. So,
14 we are hoping that the vote will not go forward, nor
15 the increases in any tuition.

16 But to get to today's topic, at the
17 committee last joint hearing on child care at CUNY
18 which was held at city College following the tour of
19 the then shuttered City College Child Development
20 Center, we welcomed University Dean Sheri Cleary who
21 had recently taken on CUNY's Campus Childcare Centers
22 and her portfolio. At that hearing, CUNY testified
23 about plans to reopen City College's CUNY Development
24 Center this fall, create a comprehensive directory of
25 campus programs available at CUNY, create a

2 centralized website for student parents to use as
3 they determine their childcare needs, to centralize
4 marketing to enhance campus-based recruitment efforts
5 to ensure that every student is aware of childcare
6 availability, to develop tools and more efficient use
7 of real-time data to understand usage, operations,
8 student retention, and graduation rates, in addition
9 to other key factors, and to consider expansion
10 possibilities for the focus on infants and toddlers,
11 as well as our campuses that lack childcare services.
12 At the time, I was hopeful about these plans and the
13 future of accessibility-- or of accessible quality
14 childcare for the CUNY student parents. Now, I have
15 concerns about the status of childcare as it is and
16 the university have been impacted by the pandemic at
17 a time when parents and CUNY student parents, in
18 particular, may have the greatest need. As a
19 relatively affordable path to the middle class, CUNY
20 has been a lifetime for New Yorkers looking to
21 improve the quality of their lives for their
22 families. It looks like I may have been knocked off.

23 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: No. You're good.

24 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. Quality for
25 their families. But and a city where childcare costs

2 are estimated an average of 1300 dollars for infant
3 care and 1030 dollars for four-year-old, access to
4 affordable, quality childcare is one of the biggest
5 hurdles student parents phase when pursuing higher
6 education. In August 2019, US Government
7 accountability office report found that more than one
8 in five undergraduate students in the country were
9 raising children and about half of the students left
10 school without a degree. In 2015 2016, an estimated
11 55 percent of student parents were single parents, 44
12 percent were working full time while enrolled, and 64
13 percent attended school part-time. Yet, despite a
14 dearth of time between parenting, completing
15 coursework, and working for pay, student parents
16 often have higher GPAs than students without
17 children. They are also more likely the job out as
18 per the Institute for Women Policy Research.

19 According to CUNY's 2016 Student Experience Survey,
20 SES, the most recent SES available online, 12 percent
21 of CUNY students, 11 percent at senior colleges, and
22 16 percent at community college were financially
23 supporting children, of which 49 person reported
24 having children under five years of age. 46 percent
25 senior colleges and 54 percent community college, yet

2 only six percent of CUNY student parents utilize
3 campus-based childcare. Meanwhile, 37 percent of
4 CUNY's student parents pay for off campus childcare.
5 Know that this issue primarily impacts women of color
6 at CUNY. 71 percent of CUNY's student parents are
7 women and 51 percent are students of color. Last
8 March, COVID forced to transition to a distance
9 learning model, which was a huge feat accomplished
10 through sheer determination. As it will be expected
11 with such a large undertaking, there were pickups
12 along the way, but we have, how of the other end and
13 now we need to understand what the, quote, new normal
14 is in light of the pandemic. And now, more than
15 ever, we need to hold fast to the university's
16 mission to be, quote, of vital importance as a
17 vehicle for the upward mobility of the disadvantaged
18 in the city of New York, end quote. In addition to
19 gaining a better understanding of the university's
20 plan to support student parents at this time, while
21 many have lost their jobs and many may be otherwise
22 struggling, I am particularly interested in the
23 status of the CUNY Family Empowerment Community
24 College Program, the pilot initiative to support
25 student parents for which CUNY's borough of Manhattan

2 community College, Bronx community College, Hostos
3 community College, and LaGuardia community College
4 received a total of 2 million dollars over three
5 years to serve approximately 160 student parents. In
6 my capacity as the Chair of the Council's Committee
7 on Higher Education, I am committed to demanding real
8 investment in the city's black and brown communities,
9 which includes investment in CUNY. This includes
10 fighting for a tuition-free CUNY, as well as
11 supportive programs that lead to degree attainment,
12 which is an investment in the city's economy.
13 Indeed, New York is one of the most culturally
14 diverse cities in the country and, along with many of
15 its great institutions, such as CUNY, New York is the
16 greatest city in world not in spite of its diversity,
17 but because of it. I would like to acknowledge the
18 work done by my chief of staff, Joy Simmons, Indigo
19 Washington, my director of legislation and CUNY
20 liaison, Chloe Navera, the committee's senior policy
21 analyst, Paul Zenegal [sp?], counsel to the
22 committee, and Monica Paragren [sp?], the committee's
23 finance analyst. And at this time, I would like to
24 have-- I will turn it over to Council member

2 Rosenthal, Chair of the Committee on Women and Gender
3 Equity for her opening statement. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Well, good morning
5 and thank you, Chair Barron. I am Council member
6 Helen Rosenthal, Chair of the Committee on Women and
7 Gender Equity. My pronouns are she/her/hers. I want
8 to thank Speaker Johnson and Chair Barron for--
9 Chair Barron of the Committee on Higher Education for
10 working with us on this important hearing. The lack
11 of affordable, quality childcare in this country has
12 had a historically profound impact on women, both
13 socially and economically. We know from research and
14 lived experience that childcare responsibilities fall
15 overwhelmingly on women. But parents are deeply
16 impacted by-- Sorry. Let me start again. But all
17 parents are deeply impacted by the availability of
18 childcare which determines whether they can work
19 outside the home, go to school, etc. I know it was
20 the case for my mom and I'm sure everyone is thinking
21 of someone they know right now who was in the same
22 situation. It's important to note that the average
23 annual costs, as Chair Barron noted, of infant care
24 in New York is over 15,000 annually, nearly 1300
25 monthly, making it simply unavailable to many

2 families. Childcare is a fundamental need and the
3 current crisis has exposed the inequities and
4 weaknesses throughout our childcare system. Many of
5 the community-based childcare centers, which were
6 closed during the pandemic, are minority and women-
7 owned businesses, but the loss of these childcare
8 centers and overall school closures force the city to
9 launch its own childcare centers for essential
10 workers. For the purposes of this hearing, we are
11 here today to investigate the lack of childcare at
12 CUNY knowing that the lack of childcare is one of the
13 main barriers that women with young children face in
14 accessing higher education and the workforce,
15 exacerbating gender-based economic inequality and
16 inequity. As mentioned at our last hearing on this
17 topic, studies show that people with a bachelor's
18 degree earn 68 percent more and are half as likely to
19 be unemployed than those with a high school degree.
20 And these economic impacts have been intensified by
21 the COVID-19 crisis. Addressing childcare at CUNY is
22 incredibly important on its own and this is why we're
23 holding a third hearing on the top during this
24 session. But CUNY is also a micro chasm for the
25 city. Striving to get childcare right for CUNY

2 students helps us get it right for everyone. Indeed,
3 our examination of demand, safety, and communication-
4 related issues within CUNY's childcare system may
5 provide insight as the city prepares to significantly
6 expand childcare services this fall. From very
7 moving testimony provided at past hearings, we know
8 that CUNY student parents have had to make the
9 difficult decision to leave school because they were
10 unaware of or unable to access CUNY's childcare
11 program. We are here today to understand why. Is
12 there a lack of communication with students regarding
13 the availability of childcare because of the limited
14 number of slots? Our central goal is to better
15 understand how we can support student parents. From
16 what we can see, the demand for childcare clearly
17 exists, as very well documented by Chair Barron. We
18 acknowledge that even with shortcomings, the city's
19 Department of Education has stepped up to provide
20 childcare and open discussion on this vital resource.
21 We commend the DOE on opening the rec centers and for
22 their work on the learning bridges program. So,
23 again, it's unclear to us how the city is measuring
24 need when only 100,000 students will receive free
25 childcare via learning bridges, yet we have the

2 student population of over 1 million. We think CUNY
3 for your time, as always, knowing that there is so
4 much more work to do. And a special thank you to the
5 many people who are going to be testifying today. We
6 know how busy you all are, especially as the demand
7 for childcare continues to grow. I'd also like to
8 thank my chief of staff, Marie Samah, my legislative
9 director, Madri Suklah, my communications director,
10 Sarah Krien, as well as the committee staff for their
11 work in preparing for this hearing. Brenda McKinney,
12 our counsel, Chloe Rivera, senior legislative policy
13 analyst, Monica Peppal, finance analyst, and
14 Elizabeth Arts, who represents community engagement.
15 I would like to acknowledge the members of the
16 Committee on Women and Gender Equity have joined us
17 today. I think Council member Ayala, Council member
18 Kallos, and Council member Lander. Thank you. I
19 turn it back to Council member Barron.

20 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you, Council
21 member Rosenthal. Chair Rosenthal. And I will now
22 turn it over to the committee counsel, Paul Zenegal,
23 who will review some procedural items relating to
24 today's hearings and administer the oaths to the
25 panels. Thank you.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair

3 Barron. I'm Paul Zenegal. I'm counsel to the
4 Committee on Higher Education of the New York City
5 Council. I will be moderating today's hearing and
6 calling panelists to testify. Before we begin, I
7 want to remind everyone that you will be on mute
8 until I call on you to testify. After you are called
9 on, you will be on muted by the host. Please listen
10 for your name. I will periodically announce the next
11 panelist will be. Council member questions will be
12 limited to five minutes. Council members, please
13 note that this includes both your question and the
14 witnesses answer. Please also note that we will only
15 allow one round of questions at today's hearing. For
16 public testimony, I will call up individuals in
17 panels. Council members who have questions for a
18 particular panelist should use the raise hand
19 function in Zoom. You will be called on after
20 everyone in that panel has completed their testimony.
21 For public panelists, once I call your name, a member
22 of our staff will unmute you and the Sergeant-at-arms
23 will give you the go ahead to begin speaking after
24 setting the timer. All public testimony will be
25 limited to five minutes. After I call your name,

2 please wait a brief moment for the Sergeant-at-arms

3 to announce that you may begin before starting your

4 testimony. I will now call on the following member

5 of the administration to testify. Sheri Cleary,

6 University Dean of Early Childhood Initiatives. And

7 I just want to note that Dean Cleary will be

8 accompanied by Keisha Fuentes who is the University

9 Manager of Childcare and Leadership Programs. Ms.

10 Fuentes will be available for questions after Dean

11 Cleary finishes her testimony. I will now deliver

12 the oath to both of you and, after, I will call upon

13 each of you individually to respond to the oath.

14 Dean Cleary, Ms. Fuentes, would you please raise your

15 right hand? Do you affirm to tell the truth, the

16 whole truth, and nothing but the truth before this

17 committee and to respond honestly to Council member

18 questions? Dean Cleary?

19 DEAN CLEARY: I do.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Ms. Fuentes?

21 KEISHA FUENTES: I do.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you very

23 much. Dean Cleary, you may begin your testimony when

24 ready.

25

2 DEAN CLEARY: Thank you very much. Good
3 morning, Chairwoman Barron and Chairwoman Rosenthal
4 and members from the Committee of Higher Education
5 and Women and Gender. I have to say I so appreciate
6 your opening comments. Thank you so much. It's my
7 pleasure to be here today. I'm joined by Keisha
8 Fuentes, my colleague in this work. I'm Sheri
9 Cleary, University Dean of Early Childhood
10 Initiatives and I have the honor of working with
11 CUNY's 17 campus childcare centers. I also lead the
12 work of the New York Early Childhood Professional
13 Institute. I co-chaired the Governor's Early
14 Childhood Advisory Council. I oversee the Family
15 Empowerment Project and I chair CUNY's newly formed
16 Student Parent Taskforce. I assure you that we have
17 made progress in every one of the components of my
18 previous testimony. In the past year, I'm also going
19 to share with you, that my office has created the
20 CUNY Early Childhood Workforce Scholarship which has
21 provided career and college advisement and
22 scholarships to support career mobility to
23 individuals working in the city's early childhood
24 programs. Of the 101st time recipient of the
25 scholarship, 99 completed their studies last semester

2 and spite of the pandemic. Of the 99 individuals who
3 completed, 91 percent were women, 87 percent were of
4 color, 72 percent or over the age of 30, and 96
5 percent earned grades ranging from A+ to B. Today,
6 I'm here to give you a report on the campus childcare
7 centers. As is the case with every entity across the
8 city, state, and country, the campus childcare
9 centers have been deeply affected. At the same time,
10 each of the programs has risen to the occasion and
11 has fulfilled their mission of serving children of
12 campus student parents with great care and attention
13 to detail while maintaining teaching relationships
14 with each and every child. You will see in the first
15 chart that I attached to my testimony about the
16 childcare centers enrolled 18 percent more children
17 in the spring 2020 semester. As the pandemic became
18 a reality, these children were served at home using a
19 range of remote learning platforms. Select centers
20 stayed open to provide childcare for essential
21 employees across the city. During the past six
22 months, the childcare centers use the funds provided
23 them by the state and the city Council to keep all
24 program staff employed. They conducted regular
25 family wellness calls and continued to engage

2 children through virtual means and through the US
3 mail and by telephone. It was immediately clear in
4 late March that are CUNY families were sustaining
5 significant illness and unthinkable loss. Our
6 student parents were caught between worrying about
7 their elderly family members, their young children,
8 and their studies. The staff of the campus childcare
9 centers called upon their family's support skills and
10 being in making regular wellness checks with our
11 student parents providing support and referrals to
12 manage health, housing, financial, and academic
13 stressors. Mitigating food insecurity was a regular
14 topic. Balancing the needs of their young children
15 with the needs of their school age children, while
16 trying to maintain an online presence with their
17 college classes and professors entailed a new kind of
18 time and attention management. The Chancellor's
19 emergency relief fund prioritized students with
20 dependents when making grant awards in late spring
21 and early summer. My office raised an additional
22 45,000 dollars of private money to add to the
23 Chancellor's emergency relief fund to send an
24 additional set of funds to the 99 student parents
25 experiencing continued financial hardship in late

2 summer. Distance learning for young children is not
3 ideal and, yet, the teachers at the CUNY campus
4 childcare centers demonstrated the creativity and
5 resourcefulness that has been used as a model
6 elsewhere in the state. Teachers found ways to
7 interact with children individually and in small
8 groups, reinforcing their already established
9 relationships creating videos, reading familiar in
10 news stories, including a book that encourages
11 parents to participate in the sentences, while
12 providing children with math and cultural lessons,
13 singing songs, dancing and exercising, and learning
14 the type of foundational skills that will serve these
15 children forever. Centers have expanded their
16 services to CUNY's student parent school-aged
17 children providing tutoring and class support and
18 social engagement on a remote basis in an effort to
19 further support student parents with children that
20 span both early and elementary ages. The directors
21 and I have been meeting weekly since the shutdown to
22 monitor their needs and to develop guidance to reopen
23 programs in anticipation of the DOHMH closure order
24 being lifted. You have the guidance for reopening
25 document that was developed by my office and sent to

2 each campus president in support of their
3 deliberations about reopening individual colleges.
4 Phased recommendations for campuses that are opening
5 for the fall include making all essential
6 arrangements, including guidelines for disinfecting,
7 cleaning, providing appropriate PPE, creating
8 policies and practices to minimize risk, limiting
9 enrollment and attendance, managing drop off and pick
10 up, and much more. I'd like to share a short video
11 made by one of our programs, the Child development
12 Center at Bronx Community College, if I may, as they
13 welcome back 25 percent of their enrollment for in
14 person learning. So, Paul, is it possible to show
15 that video?

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: The video will be
17 played shortly.

18 DEAN CLEARY: Thank you. While we're
19 waiting, I'll tell you that this video was made to
20 help parents get ready for rain joining the program
21 in a face-to-face format and then it was shared with
22 all the other programs and it has been shared across
23 the state of an example of how to support families in
24 making the transition back to a face-to-face format

2 which most families are very, very nervous about,
3 understandably.

4 [VIDEO PLAYING]

5 DEAN CLEARY: Thank you so much. I think
6 this represents the real diligent precautions that
7 each center is taking to keep children and staff safe
8 and to engender trust and peace of mind for parents
9 to come back to campuses whenever possible. Each
10 campus has made their own decision about whether to
11 reopen for children to physically attend the center.
12 Some of these decisions have been made based on the
13 level of infection the community experienced during
14 the height of the pandemic. Other factors in the
15 decision-making process involves the type of campus
16 environment. For example, vertical campuses that
17 rely heavily on elevators to move students and
18 faculty through the buildings. These plans change as
19 campus leadership continues to monitor risk and the
20 availability of support staff to manage the
21 facilities and security needs, as well as program
22 function. City College suffered construction delays
23 throughout the pandemic. I've met with both the new
24 director and campus administration over the past
25 several months, monitoring their progress in

2 supporting their efforts to mitigate me additional
3 challenges they face with construction, difficulty in
4 receiving deliveries, paramedic, and license
5 inspection delays, and decisions affecting the entire
6 campus reopening. Based on the limited student
7 presence on campus this fall, I supported their
8 decision to open the program in January, providing
9 that CUNY is able to move to a more robust in person
10 campus presidents. The director continues to prepare
11 the program for opening and is managing a waiting
12 list of city college students, faculty, and staff who
13 patiently manage their own COVID-19 circumstances.
14 Centers that are opening are doing so by name by the
15 guidance document beginning with no more of 25
16 percent of their enrollment in person. All other
17 children are receiving daily engagement from their
18 classroom teachers using virtual platforms. Most of
19 the time, the engagement moves synchronous. Some of
20 the programs have added virtual storytelling features
21 and other activities that parents can use other times
22 while they are attending one of their virtual college
23 courses. Campus says that also manage pre-K
24 contracts from the city and directly from the state
25 are in compliance with the requirements of those

2 contracts and an alignment with family choice
3 maintaining daily engagement with children in person
4 and virtually. As the semester proceeds then we
5 continue to monitor program success and challenges,
6 we will remain hyper vigilant to manage risk while
7 providing a range of supports for families and their
8 young and school-age children. We remain optimistic
9 in our belief that there will be a vaccine in the
10 future and that we will be able to build enrollment
11 across the year to accommodate as many student parent
12 children as possible. I want to thank you and I am
13 truly happy and ready to answer all of your
14 questions.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will
16 now turn to Chair Barron for questions.

17 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you very
18 much. I want to thank you for your testimony and for
19 including the video. Getting it done I'm really
20 having an opportunity for us to see what it is an
21 action. And I, before I forget, want to acknowledge
22 the behind-the-scenes staff that is working so
23 diligently on juggling all of this. I want to
24 acknowledge all of that. Before I go further, I do
25 want to acknowledge that we did have Higher Education

2 committee members as a part of the panel. Council
3 member Maisel and Councilmember Rodriguez are both on
4 this board. They were here and we want to
5 acknowledge their participation. I have got lots of
6 questions before I turn them over to my Chair
7 Rosenthal who is sharing with me today. And I'll try
8 to be so synced because I want to allow the members
9 to pose their questions, as well. First of all, what
10 is the status of the childcare center at City
11 College?

12 DEAN CLEARY: So, the City College
13 childcare center is that it is nearly complete in its
14 construction. It is working with the Department of
15 Health and Mental Hygiene to secure its final
16 inspections. Those two pieces, both construction and
17 inspections, have been delayed. Most of the
18 inspectors are also working remotely and so
19 everything is been delayed. But the center, the last
20 time I was there, which was across the summer, is
21 looking very beautiful and items have been unpacked
22 and things have been put in their place. There is a
23 robust waiting list and, when the program is able to
24 open, it will open, I would hope, with a full
25 enrollment, unless, of course, the pandemic

2 perseveres and then it will open in the same way that
3 we have guided the other programs to open. In phases
4 starting with 25 person, adding another 25 percent
5 after that, and so on. I think that, in truth,
6 because there are almost no students on campus and
7 only students who are participating in required labs
8 are on campus, it made the most sense, especially
9 since the licenses are not secure yet, to wait until
10 the spring semester when most of CUNY is anticipated
11 to move into another phase.

12 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. Let me pose
13 a more direct question.

14 DEAN CLEARY: Sure.

15 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: What is your target
16 date for opening? And how can I be of assistance in
17 helping you get the documentation or the permissions
18 that you need? Because a very, very displeased. I
19 understand the pandemic came--

20 DEAN CLEARY: Uh-hm.

21 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: but this is
22 unacceptable that it's taken five years for a program
23 that was supposed to have been-- a project those
24 supposed to be completed in one year. So what, now,
25 is your target date to open?

2 DEAN CLEARY: So, I can speak for myself.
3 My target date is that the program what open, at the
4 very least for 25 percent of its enrollment, as the
5 January semester begins. As the spring semester
6 begins. I don't want to say spring because that does
7 imply much later than January. So, all campuses
8 reopened after the winter break in late January and
9 our target date is at that point.

10 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

11 DEAN CLEARY: Everything should be done and
12 I want to say that I truly welcome your offer of help
13 and, if we need to, I will take you up on it.

14 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: I really appreciate
15 it. It's very heartfelt and sincere and I want to do
16 whatever I can to help assist in that.

17 DEAN CLEARY: Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Secondly, the
19 comprehensive directory that we discussed on our last
20 hearing, what is the status of that directory?
21 Comprehensive childcare programs are CUNY.

22 DEAN CLEARY: Yes. So, it is complete and
23 it is so the framework has been completed and we
24 continue to put more information in doing it, but
25 it's framework is complete. Some of the funding that

2 you provided to us has afforded us the opportunity to
3 hire an extraordinary data manager who has created
4 this framework for us and we just now continue to
5 populate it, but it is complete and, along those
6 lines, we now have access to real-time information.
7 He is, essentially, trained each of the directors how
8 to use that database and so, as new information
9 becomes available, it gets inputted. The pandemic is
10 forced us to think about recording information
11 slightly differently so that we have real-time data
12 this fall to determine how many children are
13 physically on site and how many children are being
14 remotely served and in what ways they are being
15 remotely served. So, we've expanded the use of this
16 directory for Keisha and I to monitor progress and
17 how the programs also are managing the pandemic. So,
18 we've expanded its value.

19 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: What is the
20 purpose, the audience, the accessibility of this
21 directory? Is it just for-- I heard you talk about
22 directors. Is this going to be accessible in some
23 form to the students that are on campus? Is it a
24 part of the website?

25 DEAN CLEARY: Yes.

2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: How do they know it
3 exists and what is the intent of the directory?

4 DEAN CLEARY: Sure. So, we are in the
5 process of building the website that I referred to
6 back in the fall or winter when I landscape
7 testimony. Clearly that effort has taken a slight
8 back burner, but that doesn't mean we stopped working
9 on it. We just slowed our work to really spend more
10 time focusing on the pandemic. But the website is in
11 development and, as that website is launched, it'll
12 have all the basic directory information on it.
13 Students will be able to use it to consult-- to
14 figure out where they might want to be. As I
15 understand it, a request of the city Council a few
16 years back influenced and inspired a change in our
17 policy which is that a student who attends a campus
18 that doesn't have campus childcare can now attend an
19 existing campus child care center on a different
20 campus. In this directory and website will
21 facilitate those matches much better. And, at the
22 onset of the pandemic when we decided to be open for
23 emergency workers, essential workers, we formed and
24 created a centralized site, website and contact
25 number and that was a great test case for what we

2 intend to do going forward, which is to have a
3 centralized way for student parents to find child
4 care. And so, we also alluded to that in my previous
5 testimony and tested that with the pandemic. It was
6 most effective. It worked. And so, we will continue
7 to work in this vein so that when student parents
8 find that they need childcare, they have a
9 centralized place to go. They surely can do what
10 they use to do, which is go to a campus childcare
11 center physically and apply, but also have a
12 centralized place where we can track and monitor
13 that.

14 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. So the
15 directory information will be used for the website so
16 that students know what's available. Now, you said
17 you tested it during the pandemic. How did you
18 tested and how did that manifest itself and what did
19 you find?

20 DEAN CLEARY: So, what we did in the
21 pandemic-- So, during the pandemic, we kept two
22 programs open first with the plan to open others if
23 there was enough demand. There was not enough
24 demand. And this was also experienced by the DOE
25 when they set up their childcare. They set up much

2 more childcare than there was actually a demand for.

3 So, but having said that, what we did was we created
4 a website and a centralized phone number and an email
5 address where people could go if they needed care.

6 For the essential workers, what they did was they
7 created a flyer and we circulated that far and wide
8 amongst hospitals and other essential workplaces and
9 then, as people needed childcare, they could contact
10 that email or phone number and then they received a
11 call immediately back-- Keisha monitor this. If
12 Keisha was on the phone, she would call them
13 immediately back if they left a message. If they
14 emailed her, she contacted them immediately and did
15 an intake of what they needed, how old their children
16 were, where they worked, where they lived, where
17 their geographic preference was. We purposefully
18 kept a program open in Manhattan, lower Manhattan,
19 and in the Bronx to try to get some geographical
20 span. And then, as people asked-- told us what they
21 needed, she made references. And the only--

22 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [inaudible
23 00:42:55]

24 DEAN CLEARY: And I would only--

25 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: I'm sorry.

2 DEAN CLEARY: And we not only suggested
3 that they use one of our two programs, but, if that
4 didn't work, we made other referrals to them to try
5 to help them find a place that met their need.

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: What were the
7 locations of the two sites that you used and how--

8 DEAN CLEARY: Sure.

9 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: many students were
10 enrolled? How many children? I'm sorry.

11 DEAN CLEARY: Yep. Lehman and BMCC. And
12 after about six weeks, we closed BMCC because there
13 was no interest from essential workers to use lower
14 Manhattan and Lehman stayed open across the summer--
15 spring and summer-- but very, very few children. I
16 think at any one time, they probably served between
17 five and eight children. So, there were very few
18 children, families, who took advantage of this
19 availability.

20 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: I find that
21 interesting because I would've thought that there was
22 a greater need than just five or eight. And was it
23 limited to just the essential workers or did you do
24 in outreach then soon see you did have a center to
25 trade a get others involved?

2 DEAN CLEARY: We did outreach in the
3 governor's office did our age. The governor's office
4 asked for the flyer and sent the flyer to as many--
5 We gave them full-- We said, send it to whomever you
6 think in the city will need our services. And that's
7 just what happened. So we were open. We worked, we
8 manned the phone and email account every single day
9 and there were probably-- you know, there were
10 several people that inquired, but what they needed or
11 were able--

12 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [interposing]

13 DEAN CLEARY: find other places.

14 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: What hours that it
15 was available? The service hours.

16 DEAN CLEARY: Good question. So each
17 program was open for five days a week full, full
18 days. So eight to six on any given day.

19 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: All right. So that
20 leads me to my next question which is we had talked
21 about it in our last hearing. Centralized marketing
22 to enhance the campus-based center availability
23 knowing that they were there and [inaudible 00:45:29]
24 because I think that there's a disconnect someplace.
25 So, that comment about only five to eight during the

2 summer leads directly to the next question. How are
3 we going to make sure that the marketing that we are
4 doing for the knowledge to get out that these
5 childcare centers exist, what are we going to do to
6 market it?

7 DEAN CLEARY: So, once we finish this
8 website, we will have a centralized website that will
9 have this directory on it. We will provide people
10 with guidance, simple guidance, how to identify their
11 need and then we will be able to centrally monitor
12 what people need and where people need it and how
13 they need it. They also have an additional affect
14 because, as we understand what student parents need,
15 we will be able to support our programs to add infant
16 care, to add additional hours. As you probably
17 remember, some of our programs have very extensive
18 hours and days of services. You know, I always use
19 BMCC as an example. They're open, during regular
20 life, they are open seven days a week and five nights
21 a week. So, we want to monitor what is that the
22 student parents need? I would also add that we have
23 established a student parent task force that is CUNY
24 wide to begin to really study and understand what are
25 all the needs of student parents. This task force

2 charge exceeds or extends past early childhood and
3 childcare, but, course, there will be a significant
4 focus on early childhood and childcare. But we are
5 also extended to really better understand and help
6 campuses understand what are all the opportunities to
7 meet the needs and support the success of student
8 parents. In your testimony, you surely acknowledged
9 that our student parents are some of our best
10 students. They are some of our most motivated
11 students and we want to consider all the ways that we
12 can support them. So--

13 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: In terms of the
14 marketing that were talking about to let students
15 know--

16 DEAN CLEARY: Uh-hm.

17 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: how will you gather
18 the information to determine where the greatest need
19 is, whether it is for UPK, K3, or early child? How
20 will you know--

21 DEAN CLEARY: Uh-hm.

22 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: where the need is
23 so that you can determine how you will set it up at
24 the different campuses? And as it--

25 DEAN CLEARY: So one of--

2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: is each campus?

3 DEAN CLEARY: So, one of the pieces of work
4 we did over the summer was to meet with central
5 office data people to try to determine what is the
6 best way as soon as the student becomes affiliated
7 with the City University of New York, to determine
8 whether they are student parent, what their goals
9 are, and how old their children are, so we can
10 contact them. In other words, where not going to
11 wait until they contact us. We will contact them to
12 say, well come to CUNY. We understand that you are a
13 parent, as well, and he would like to understand what
14 your goals are at CUNY and what your needs are. And
15 so by--

16 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So, what is that
17 document that will capture that information?
18 [inaudible 00:49:07] student application to CUNY or
19 is it a separate document or do they have to log into
20 their student account? What is that document that
21 will capture that information so that you can help
22 determine the level of child care services in terms
23 of the types of programs?

24 DEAN CLEARY: So, one of the things that we
25 have acknowledged in the course of these meetings is

2 that CUNY's students come to us in many different
3 ways.

4 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right.

5 DEAN CLEARY: So, one form is to use their
6 FAFSA form, but it's not adequate and enough because
7 not everybody files a FAFSA form and not everybody--
8 So, we worry that we wouldn't catch everybody that
9 way. So, we will use the FAFSA form to first
10 determine who has dependence and then we are working
11 right this moment on is there a question on the
12 application that we would add? You know, what are
13 the other ways? We have met with some of our central
14 office partners that run our programs where students
15 come in may be at a-- you know, at a job-training
16 level and how can we access their needs and support
17 and provide support? So, were working with different
18 parts of the central office to make sure that we are
19 maximizing our ability to identify as many student
20 parents as we can.

21 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And when do you
22 anticipate that you will have that document or that
23 question on the application or question on the
24 outreach entry form that students will be completing?
25 When do you anticipate that will be ready so that we

2 know every student entering CUNY or already in CUNY--
3 that's another question. Not just those that are
4 entering, but those that are already in. How do we
5 do that? So, when will you have this comprehensive
6 ability to let students know all of the grant
7 programs that all of CUNY has?

8 DEAN CLEARY: So, we will work on building
9 our capacity this year. This academic year started
10 last week, two weeks ago. We're working on that now.
11 We have another meeting next week. We will begin to
12 figure out where the gaps in what we are able to
13 collect and start building strategies that way. We
14 will think about how we integrate ourselves in new
15 student orientation. I think there are a lot of
16 different ways for us to build this capacity. I
17 would expect that, within this calendar year-- I'm
18 sorry. Within this academic year, we will have all
19 of our strategies in place. It takes a bit to get
20 something into the new application. This student
21 application. To your point, we need to collect data
22 on existing students.

23 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes.

24

25

2 DEAN CLEARY: And so, we have to figure out
3 what that looks like and how we go about that. So,
4 you ask a great question. We're working on it.

5 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. Not to be
6 insensitive to all of the needs and the pressing
7 demands and the urgency that were facing, if we could
8 work double time or double up our efforts and get it
9 for January, along with the city college child
10 development center open, that would be really great.
11 And, again, if I could be of any assistance, please
12 let me know. I'm available to put in some ideas and
13 hours and I have staff that I can assist with that I
14 can have assist with. I really think that it is
15 critical that we open these opportunities for
16 students so that they can get into having themselves
17 complete their education because they know that have
18 child care. And, lastly, before I turn to my
19 colleague, Helen Rosenthal, how can we expand what we
20 are already doing? How can we increase the numbers?
21 Because that was one of the questions that we asked
22 from the previous hearing. How can we expand that in
23 what can be done?

24 DEAN CLEARY: We've increased enrollment in
25 the spring semester and we think that we can increase

2 enrollment even still by centralizing our work a bit
3 more and we have written a proposal, still pending.
4 We should know something mid-October or no later than
5 the end of October. We have written a proposal to
6 actually deepen and strengthen the work that some of
7 our programs to and, some of that proposal was to
8 determine whether we could add more infant and
9 toddler care. We acknowledge it is very important to
10 me that we expand not only in number, but in the age
11 ranges of children that we serve. We know that if
12 student parents can start back to school earlier with
13 younger children, they probably would have a better
14 chance of succeeding and, of course, finishing, which
15 is for everybody the goal. And so, we've just, as I
16 said, written a proposal for private money to build
17 out some of this work with the goal, and for
18 successful in, A, and for granted the money, and
19 doing what we promised, to then expand out after the
20 first 18 months of this project to include even more
21 campuses.

22 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right.

23 DEAN CLEARY: So, we're going to start
24 targeting three campuses and then expand out. And
25 so, while we are incredibly indebted to you, the city

2 Council, for your support, we are also interested in
3 finding some private money to help us make a greater
4 expansion quicker.

5 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes.

6 DEAN CLEARY: So, that's what I will say.
7 We know it is both about centralizing our work to
8 increase enrollment, but also to look at how can we
9 serve a wider age range of children to go down into
10 the infant program.

11 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Thank
12 you so much for your testimony.

13 DEAN CLEARY: My pleasure.

14 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And, at this time,
15 I will turn it over to my cochair, Council member
16 Helen Rosenthal, Chair of the Committee on Women in
17 Gender Equity. Thank you. I have lost more
18 questions, but I want to share the time. Thank you.

19 DEAN CLEARY: Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Thank you, Chair
21 Barron. I really appreciate that. And you already
22 hit on some of the most important questions and
23 cleared up a lot of the questions that we have been
24 having going into this hearing. So, I really
25 appreciate you--

2 DEAN CLEARY: I'm glad.

3 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: for that. Dean

4 Cleary, I really just have two questions or two areas
5 of questions that I want to focus on. One is sort of
6 trying to get a better handle on whether or not we
7 are meeting the demand for childcare and, secondly,
8 around the funding. So, I would like to start with
9 the demand and, Chair Barron laid it out in her
10 testimony where she gave the data from CUNY's 2016
11 SES which was the most recently available-- I guess
12 my first question is when will the 2018 or the more
13 recent survey be available?

14 DEAN CLEARY: So, that's a great question.
15 I'll have to find out. I think I'm just too new to
16 know, but that's no real excuse. I'll find out.

17 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Do you know if an
18 SES has been done since the 2016 one?

19 DEAN CLEARY: I don't, but I will find out.
20 I'm sorry. But I would also say that, if there's any
21 question about whether we are meeting the need, the
22 simple answer is, absolutely not.

23 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Yeah. I mean,
24 thank you. Thank you for acknowledging that. I
25 mean, just a simple map from the 2016 survey, you

2 know, the total number of students is roughly 275,012
3 percent need childcare, that means about 33,000 need
4 childcare. And, you know, roughly 1700, maybe more,
5 use the on-site CUNY services, again, using the
6 statistics from that Chair Barron shared about 12,000
7 pay for off-campus care. So, that totals up to
8 roughly 14,000 students and what is going on with the
9 remaining 19,000 students? You know, how many are
10 dropping out because they don't have child care at
11 all? You know, fundamentally, meeting the needs of
12 17-- 1800 students when you have 33,002 are parents,
13 you know, should give all of us pause.

14 DEAN CLEARY: Yes. There's no question.
15 And, of course, pre-K, the establishment of pre-K has
16 affected all childcare across the city. It has
17 destabilized childcare across the city. I'm proud to
18 say that the campus childcare centers have figured
19 out how to incorporate pre-K and of the programs that
20 they have so they have not suffered the loss of
21 enrollment that others have, but I think we know, for
22 sure, that there is a greater need. You know, I'm
23 sure it's not 33,000, but we know that it's easily a
24 lot more than we currently serve.

2 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: So, I'm a little
3 confused by what you just said. I mean--

4 DEAN CLEARY: Sure.

5 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: you're sort of
6 flipping an idea. You're saying that other childcare
7 centers have been destabilized, in other words, they
8 are losing children--

9 DEAN CLEARY: Yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: to the now free
11 and available universal pre-K, but it would strike
12 me, particularly given what you just said, that we
13 know there is more demand out there that, in fact,
14 CUNY should let those kids go to the free UPK and use
15 all of its spots for the people who need something
16 different than free UPK. Like I don't understand the
17 thinking--

18 DEAN CLEARY: I can explain.

19 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: of-- Yeah.

20 DEAN CLEARY: Yeah. So, here's what it's
21 really important to be mindful of is that services
22 for three and four-year-olds in childcare help make
23 childcare financially viable. And so, program, no
24 matter how well it is funded-- and no program is
25 funded well enough to serve only children from birth

2 to age three. There is no program in the country
3 that is funded well enough, unless it has
4 extraordinary private resources, to serve children
5 only from birth to three. Childcare locally,
6 statewide, and nationally, requires a balanced
7 enrollment of all the ages. And three and four-year-
8 old children who require-- to have a higher ratio of
9 teacher to child, stabilize the financial stability
10 of an early childhood program. And, further, with
11 the campus childcare centers have done is responded
12 to the DOE requests that they also serve pre-K
13 children because the city has been looking always for
14 high quality settings for it to put pre-K in. And
15 so, there is some--

16 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: But, does that mean
17 that the University is paying for that UPK? In other
18 words--

19 DEAN CLEARY: No.

20 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: taking on that--

21 DEAN CLEARY: Their pre-K is funded.

22 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: burden is that
23 funded by the DOE?
24
25

2 DEAN CLEARY: Funded by the DOE and
3 strengthening the financial models, in many cases,
4 the centers themselves. So, your programs like--

5 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: I mean, you have to
6 sort of way what you're saying here. You're saying
7 that you got money to take care of a segment of the
8 population, but you are not acknowledging your taking
9 the space is an, therefore, they are not available to
10 cancer or other ages. And, basically, what you are
11 saying is, because the CUNY system doesn't have the
12 money to adequately fund childcare, you have to give
13 up spaces that could be serving zero to three by
14 taking the money from DOE to financier childcare
15 centers. Another way of thinking-- And I understand
16 finances drives so much. I really do. More than you
17 probably know. And much decision-making is based on
18 the finances that are available. That doesn't mean
19 it's good decision-making. It just means that you
20 need money, but, fundamentally, what could've
21 happened is CUNY campus says could have said to their
22 parents, use the free UPK that the city is offering,
23 perhaps on elementary school near you, and a
24 childcare site near you. I've got plenty in my
25 district. Use that in, if the money were available,

2 which it's not, then CUNY would have had more space
3 is for the people who need childcare for zero to
4 three.

5 DEAN CLEARY: So, I guess what I'm
6 suggesting is, of the 33,000 children that we
7 acknowledge that CUNY has, many of them are already
8 using their community-based pre-K.

9 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Yes. We know the
10 14,000 are.

11 DEAN CLEARY: [inaudible 01:04:13]

12 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Or 13,000. No. I
13 mean, I'm just doing the math off of your 2016--

14 DEAN CLEARY: Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: SES.

16 DEAN CLEARY: So--

17 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: 13,000 are using
18 their community.

19 DEAN CLEARY: Correct.

20 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: That means that
21 19,000 need somewhere to go.

22 DEAN CLEARY: Right. So, parents choose
23 different things. Some of them choose to use campus
24 childcare and we acknowledge that we need many more
25 spaces for more student parents to use our programs.

2 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Right. And what
3 I'm saying is that, because CUNY made the decision to
4 take the money from DOE--

5 DEAN CLEARY: Uh-hm.

6 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: in order to
7 subsidize the cost, you actually-- CUNY actually
8 lost spaces that could of been made available by the
9 city's generous offering, brilliant offering-- no
10 question-- of universal pre-K. What you've done
11 fundamentally because CUNY is not prioritizing
12 childcare, as they are taking city money to take away
13 space is that could have been freed up, if you have
14 the money, for zero to three. And so, if what you're
15 taking-- I mean, I guess I'd be curious to know, the
16 1750 childcare slots, how many are UPK?

17 DEAN CLEARY: I can get the number for you.

18 But I am--

19 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: But that tells us--

20 DEAN CLEARY: Sure.

21 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: mean, let's assume
22 it's half. I mean--

23 DEAN CLEARY: Yeah. It's not.

24

25

2 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: I mean, a quarter.
3 A quarter? 10 percent? If it's 10 percent, that's
4 175 kids.

5 DEAN CLEARY: Uh-hm.

6 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: 175 student parents
7 who can't send their kids to CUNY because you don't
8 have space.

9 DEAN CLEARY: So, let me assure you that
10 the majority of the children that are three and four,
11 and are especially for that are being partially
12 funded by a pre-K spot, the majority of them are CUNY
13 children whose parents want them to be on campus with
14 them. And I hear what you are saying.

15 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Yeah. Okay.

16 DEAN CLEARY: I just--

17 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: I mean, I think--

18 DEAN CLEARY: We're trying to really meet
19 the needs of what parents are telling us they want.
20 And it is not a good idea, from a child development
21 standpoint, to have a child is somewhere for a year
22 or two and then move for a year or two, and then yet
23 another move. So the consistency--

24 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Of course.

25 DEAN CLEARY: [inaudible 01:07:06]

2 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Of course. I'm all
3 for stability.

4 DEAN CLEARY: Right. So--

5 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: But I'm just saying
6 that--

7 DEAN CLEARY: I appreciate that.

8 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: And I do want to
9 link this to the second point which has to do with
10 cost. And what I am struck by is, in your testimony,
11 you said that you were able to raise 45,000 dollars
12 for 99 kids to get childcare.

13 DEAN CLEARY: No. No. Sorry. We raised
14 some money to add to the Chancellor's emergency
15 relief fund to just provide parents of our highest
16 need families-- to provide them with some financial
17 support. Not childcare. So, let me just talk for a
18 minute about the emergency relief fund that the
19 Chancellor created. Early on, there was private
20 funding in public funding combined to support
21 students at the City University of New York that were
22 in desperate need of financial support and
23 assistance. Those monies were distributed in late
24 spring across all of our 25 campuses for students
25 that were determined to have financial need. It

2 wasn't a lot of money, but it was something that kind
3 of give them a little bit of support. When we
4 realize that we, too, could perhaps do more of that,
5 we raised-- we were able to apply for a 45,000
6 grant. I did that. And we then identified 99
7 families that currently attend our programs who were
8 experiencing, as I said, greater financial need. It
9 was simply an effort just to help people get through
10 the summer and early fall and it was not-- it was
11 just financial support. It had nothing to do with
12 childcare. It was just--

13 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Oh. So you don't
14 even know if it went to help with childcare.

15 DEAN CLEARY: Well, most of our families--
16 No. No. It was as parents wanted to use it. It
17 was--

18 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Sure. It could be
19 for food, it could be for rent.

20 DEAN CLEARY: Yes.

21 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Gotcha'. No. I
22 gotcha'.

23 DEAN CLEARY: Yes.

24 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: All right.

25 DEAN CLEARY: Simply that.

2 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: All right. I'm
3 done for this moment. I'm going to turn it back to
4 Chair Barron. I may want a second round, but I'm
5 going to turn it back to you. I don't see any
6 questions from our colleagues, so turn it back to
7 you, Chair Barron.

8 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. I will
9 turn it to the counsel. Do we have colleagues that
10 have questions that they want to raise?

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes. If any
12 council members have questions, please use the Zoom
13 raise hand function. Seeing none, we'll turn it back
14 to Chair Barron.

15 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. So, I
16 want to follow up on the question that my colleague
17 just asked. In terms of the assistance that you gave
18 to those 99 students, what was the average cost?
19 What was the criteria for determining who would be
20 eligible and what was the average award that each of
21 them received?

22 DEAN CLEARY: So, there was no average.
23 Each of them got 500 dollars.

24 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. They each
25 got 500 dollars.

2 DEAN CLEARY: And the criteria, we worked
3 with each of the directors given that they had
4 regular weekly contact with families and understood
5 the issues and challenges that families were
6 receiving to prioritize a list of families that they
7 felt needed support the most. It was not as
8 scientific criteria. It was weekly interaction,
9 feedback, checking in with families every week,
10 finding out where their stressors were. And that--
11 So, again, not exactly a scientific approach, but, as
12 personal as we could keep it. And we created a
13 confidential list and then sent it through for these
14 disbursements.

15 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. Thank you.
16 In terms of the set up at the child development
17 centers, the video showed that there was a clear
18 barrier between children that would be positioned at
19 either end of the desk. Is that something that we
20 would see at every child development center?

21 DEAN CLEARY: It's interesting that you
22 ask. Each program was guided to take as many
23 different precautions as they could and so, my best
24 answer would be most of them are using that strategy.
25 Some of them may have found other strategies that

2 they felt made a better accommodation. You'll notice
3 that, in the video, they didn't talk about social
4 distancing. They talked about physical distancing
5 in, so I think that-- and the other thing that I
6 would point out is that, in the course of the video,
7 they say that, if your child needs a hug, they will
8 get a hug. And I think this is the kind of challenge
9 that everybody would acknowledge that we are
10 experience across the city and state and country. It
11 is do we touch people? Do we not touch people? And
12 you can't not touch little children. Children will
13 need help in the bathroom. They will need help, you
14 know, eating their lunches. We have all these
15 strategies about we no longer doubt to what is
16 normally acceptable behavior and, actually,
17 encouraged behavior, which is family-style eating.
18 Every child will have their own portioned out food
19 and we will throw away everything after the meal.
20 All of those things will be in play. So, physical
21 distancing of all sorts. Then the other thing I will
22 say is that, you know, this requires-- since every
23 classroom that is physically open and also will have
24 remote learning component to it, we are using every
25 available staff member because, at the same time that

2 it teachers with children, there is another teacher
3 with children remotely. And so, everybody is doing
4 the best they can to meet the needs of the kids that
5 they are surveying. And it will be different and an
6 infant room as it will be in a preschool room, which
7 is what we saw. A preschool room with Plexiglas.

8 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And in those
9 settings that you have been using, how do you
10 sanitize the play equipment, the books, the stuffed
11 animals? How do you sanitize them?

12 DEAN CLEARY: So, no stuffed animals
13 anymore. Right? All soft, porous materials have
14 been removed. Every classroom has been rearranged to
15 eliminate any extra stuff. As you might know, early
16 childhood classrooms typically have a lot of stuff in
17 them.

18 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Uh-hm.

19 DEAN CLEARY: These classrooms have been
20 really kind of pruned to only have materials they
21 need. Every time a child abuse is the material or
22 piece of equipment, it is put up for disinfecting.
23 In typical terms, and it's a photo classroom that a
24 child does a puzzle and it gets put back on the
25 shelf, and now the child does a puzzle and it gets

2 put out for somebody else to come along and
3 disinfected. There are a couple ways to disinfect.
4 We have disinfecting chemical. You know, all child
5 safe, of course. So things are sprayed and then they
6 are air dried, which is the recommended approach.
7 And then, as they are tried, they are put back on the
8 shelves. So, what teachers have had to do in every
9 classroom that is open is proving the amount of
10 stuff, but to make sure that there is enough stuff to
11 be rotated in, is what I will say.

12 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right. I want to
13 acknowledge that we have been joined by Majority
14 Leader Laurie Cumbo who is a member of the Hire
15 Education Committee. I wanted to make that
16 acknowledgment. And if you have any questions,
17 Council member Cumbo, please indicate that and the
18 counsel will know that he can call on you on the
19 appropriate time. For CUNY, was there any
20 interaction between CUNY and the rec centers that the
21 DOE established?

22 DEAN CLEARY: No.

23 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So there were no--

24 DEAN CLEARY: Not that I'm aware.
25

2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. So, there
3 were no rec centers a CUNY?

4 DEAN CLEARY: Not that I'm aware of. No.

5 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. And have you
6 been involved at all with providing any type of--
7 it's not really a question specifically for early
8 development, for early childhood, but have you been
9 involved with the DOE in terms of considering what
10 might be done to accelerate those persons, those
11 students who are in a teacher prep class that they
12 might, in fact, be able to accelerate their classes
13 or the requirements so that they can, in fact, become
14 teachers? Even perhaps in early childhood setting?

15 DEAN CLEARY: Well, in community-based
16 organizations, people who have not yet received their
17 credentials can certainly work in childhood settings
18 and they can work in those settings with study plans.
19 And another part of my office help students work on
20 those study plans. In earlier in my testimony, I
21 talked about a scholarship program that we funded at
22 CUNY for the early childhood workforce to ask but
23 eyes their credential and agrees success. Also, we
24 worked with the state of New York, the state
25 education department, to extend certification for our

2 graduates who had not yet passed to the certification
3 exam so they got a grace period for a year so that
4 they could begin their teaching as certified teachers
5 while they were using a grace period of a year to
6 take their exams. In my office tutors people to
7 prepare than to prepare for their exams and just pass
8 them successfully. So, my office on a number of
9 other CUNY offices are very involved in trying to
10 support students in early childhood and childhood Ed
11 to work through the systems and get employment. In
12 my office, early childhood is our biggest focus. We
13 also acknowledging that almost immediately the
14 Department of Health and Mental Hygiene in the city
15 close down the childcare centers at the onset of the
16 pandemic, we created an employment network for people
17 who lost their work and for students who also lost
18 their work to connect with other employers to try and
19 make matches so that they could find work. We were
20 most concerned about our students who need to work to
21 continue to manage their studies. And so, we have
22 this employment network--

23 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right.

24 DEAN CLEARY: that has been working very
25 well.

2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Getting
3 back to getting students to know-- student parents
4 to know that there is some availability, your setting
5 each campus will have its own policy that will follow
6 the guidelines that you have been issued, that you
7 have issued for them to be aware of. So, as of
8 Friday, September the 4th, we did not-- the staff
9 that did the research did not see that many of the
10 campuses and, in fact, any updated information about
11 their childcare center. What is your role from
12 central in assisting campuses to get the information
13 out? They have links to their centers, but there is
14 not information. The colleges have links, but there
15 is no updated information. So, what is your role in
16 assisting and having oversight to the campuses to
17 help them understand that they've got to get it out?

18 DEAN CLEARY: Yeah. So, my role is to
19 support the 17 campus programs. My role is to meet
20 with them on a regular basis and to help them do the
21 work that they need to do. They are autonomous to a
22 very large extent. The majority of the programs are
23 private 501(c)(3)s and may work independently. They
24 function as small businesses. In my role is to bring
25 them together to help them consider best practices,

2 help them be more successful in the way that they run
3 their businesses, and to support the way they meet
4 the needs of each and every CUNY campus. In this
5 particular moment, every campus, every college, was
6 given the responsibility of deciding how it would
7 reopen and what that would mean. What did they open
8 their libraries? Would they open their campus
9 childcare centers? What classes the in-person or
10 virtual or hybrid? Would they only have their lab
11 students on campus and everybody else online? So,
12 every single campus-- and there are, as you know
13 better probably than I-- there are 25 campuses.
14 They have tremendous autonomy and the Chancellor
15 honors that autonomy and gave them that choice. So,
16 each of our childcare centers is working with their
17 individual campus administration to make the best
18 arrangements. And those arrangements, and the last
19 three weeks, has shifted a little bit as we become
20 more comfortable, as we understand what it would mean
21 to include young children on a campus, and, as you
22 might imagine, there are some campuses that are so
23 very worried about the health and welfare of small
24 children coming to campus during the pandemic. And
25 so, each campus is managing it in their own way. Our

2 guidance was meant as a floor. Like if you are going
3 to reopen, use of recommendations we're making.

4 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: How many campuses
5 have indicated that they are reopening?

6 DEAN CLEARY: At least between eight are
7 reopened and more are considering a phased-in
8 opening.

9 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Are there any that
10 indicate that they will not reopen? Have
11 definitively said that they will not reopen?

12 DEAN CLEARY: Yes. Yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Do we know why?

14 DEAN CLEARY: And I think we provided you
15 with a list so that you have it somewhere. I don't
16 mean for you to look at it, but John Jay has not yet
17 decided. I'm just looking at my list here. Medgar,
18 I think, has decided not to open. Brooklyn is
19 considering how to manage because they have a state
20 contract and then they have their other enrollment.
21 So, they are working on it.

22 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And do we know--
23 You said some of them are questioning whether they
24 will reopen.

25 DEAN CLEARY: Yeah. Yeah.

2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Others are phasing
3 in. Do we know why Medgar is not reopening?

4 DEAN CLEARY: It acknowledges that it may
5 reopen for some of its pre-K children that the long
6 the student parents, but I think that Medgar felt
7 that-- and I want to be careful that I don't speak
8 for them, but I think they felt that it wasn't safe.
9 That they were very worried about the amount of
10 disease in Brooklyn and in that immediate community,
11 as was Brooklyn College. In the Flatbush area, there
12 was tremendous illness and so I didn't speak-- all
13 always respond if a campus administration wants to
14 discuss their reopening plans and we had a really
15 viable conversation with Brooklyn who expressed their
16 concern about the number of families in their
17 communities that had been stricken. And their
18 initial decision was that they didn't want to have
19 anybody on campus.

20 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

21 DEAN CLEARY: And I suspect-- Again, I'm
22 not speaking for Medgar. I have not talked to their
23 campus administration, but I suspect that their
24 concern was simply around health and safety of
25 children of student parents.

2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Now, in
3 the spring semester where there were the campuses
4 that did maintain their services and you said you
5 were able to maintain the employees and muted not
6 have two dismiss any employees, what is your
7 expectation going forward, starting with this
8 semester, in terms of employment?

9 DEAN CLEARY: Yeah. Great. So, this is a
10 month-to-month issue for us and it is driven by--
11 So, first let me say about the support that the city
12 Council has provided has helped stabilize this work
13 in a dramatic fashion. The second layer of
14 stabilization has come from the Office of Children
15 and Family Services in the they made a decision early
16 in the pandemic that they would honor the enrollment
17 numbers that were in effect back in March and may
18 have funded each of our programs based on that level
19 of funding every month since the pandemic. That
20 combination of funding has enabled teachers to remain
21 in plan, directors-- the staff to remain employed
22 and that has enabled them to do this one-on-one, you
23 know, regular family wellness checks, and small group
24 teaching, individualized teaching with children. You
25 know, I'm sure I don't have to tell you that a two-

2 year-old or a three-year-old really can't be online
3 by themselves and needs help on both ends, both from
4 a parent and a teacher on one end. So, there's a lot
5 of individual, small group, and midsize group
6 instruction going on on a daily basis. And so, that
7 funding has allowed that to stay whole. And so
8 that's--

9 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And are you going
10 to anticipate that there will be any layoffs of any
11 of the employees at the child development centers?

12 DEAN CLEARY: I worry about it every single
13 day and Keisha has been extraordinary in keeping
14 contact with the Office of Children and Family
15 Services on a regular basis to ensure that we receive
16 this grace of funding every single month so we, as of
17 last week, know that September is funded and we hope
18 that October will be funded. And that is how we have
19 been-- how the programs have been sustained each
20 month by your steady funding in this monthly
21 affirmation of funding that we've had since the day--

22 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [interposing]
23 Right. I think Council member Chair Rosenthal has a
24 great experience with those juggling and monthly
25 allotments since a budget has not been approved and

2 each level of government waiting for the level above
3 them to come with some kind of definitive statement.
4 So, we understand that that is a problem.

5 DEAN CLEARY: Yeah.

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: I don't know if
7 Chair Rosenthal has further questions?

8 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: I do. Thank you
9 very much. And I really appreciate the issues that
10 you just got to, Chair Barron, and Dean Cleary, your
11 honest responses. I really appreciate that and, you
12 know, can tell you are juggling a lot. So, thank
13 you. I'm wondering is the child care centers are--
14 have a plan for a possible second wave of COVID?

15 DEAN CLEARY: We do. We have been working
16 on that through the summer. So, one of the things
17 that is happened in most of our sites is that, not
18 only did we maintain an online presence, but,
19 periodically, the programs would send families
20 activities and materials to work with at home. We
21 fully appreciate that not all of our families have a
22 preschool classroom in their living rooms. And so,
23 we've been sending things periodically and, what
24 we've talked about and what the staff have been doing
25 is creating what we call go bags so that, if a

2 program was to have to reclose, that on that day,
3 children would leave the site with a bag of things.

4 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Got it. That's
5 great.

6 DEAN CLEARY: So, we're really worried--
7 You know, we never have the luxury-- and I'll call
8 it that-- to talk about the social emotional impact
9 of this craziness, this madness, on small children.
10 You know, they experience their parent's stress, but
11 they don't understand it. They have--

12 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Yeah.

13 DEAN CLEARY: their own stress because they
14 use to come to school every day or every other day
15 and now they don't. They used to have a grandma and
16 either they don't have one anymore or they just can't
17 see her anymore. And not everybody is so great, you
18 know, with FaceTime. And there are-- you know, not
19 every grandma is great with FaceTime. And so, there
20 are all these things and so, what the campus
21 childcare staff have been committed to-- I would
22 call it dedicated to-- is somehow keeping a real-
23 life line of social emotional connection to these
24 children. And so, you know, you could go online and
25 download somebody reading the story, but it's way,

2 way better if the teacher you know is reading you
3 that story. And so teachers have videotaped
4 themselves reading stories. They have videotaped
5 themselves, you know, doing exercises and song so
6 that a parent can--

7 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: [inaudible
8 01:31:10]

9 DEAN CLEARY: And so these go bags are a
10 part of that. Like what would happen if we end up
11 with a second wave and we have to shut down again?
12 How are we going to stay connected to these children
13 and help them? So go bags, mailing things, you know,
14 CUNY has been extraordinary in that. While it feels
15 like nobody's on campus, if we have to do a mailing,
16 you can contact the mail room on campus and they'll
17 help with that. So they'll help with that kind of
18 thing.

19 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Okay.

20 DEAN CLEARY: A few programs are member--
21 are participants of Quality Stars New York and they
22 have had additional supports to get things out into
23 the homes. So--

24 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Makes sense. Thank
25 you. And then, again, this is a tricky issue when it

2 comes to fees, but also, you know, what are you
3 charging students, but also having enough money to
4 keep your teachers employed and the childcare centers
5 open. I am wondering if someone chooses to send
6 their child or have their child. Child care
7 remotely, is there a discount of some sort?

8 DEAN CLEARY: It's my understanding that
9 most of the programs are not charging for remote
10 learning.

11 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Oh, wow.

12 DEAN CLEARY: And I think it's, of course,
13 the decision of campus by campus. I think the
14 mindset there was that these are families that are
15 already experiencing extraordinary hardship and that,
16 if they could avoid-- now I think you already know
17 that some of our families pay less-- you know, they
18 pay five dollars a week in regular circumstance.

19 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Sure.

20 DEAN CLEARY: In some programs, five
21 dollars a day. But most of our programs have-- I
22 forgot to mention that they also have, many of them,
23 have campus grants. Those are federal dollars. That
24 money has also remained intact. So, the programs
25 have been able to hold themselves whole. You know,

2 some of them of loss staff just because the staff has
3 decided they just can't work in these moments, but,
4 for the most part, the staffs are intact and they are
5 covered by the different funding levels. And if a
6 program was able to not charge families, they have
7 not charged families. And just last week, we had a
8 conversation about, you know, how people came to
9 those decisions. And, obviously, it's based on the
10 simple fact that these student parents are
11 experiencing incredible hardship.

12 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Do you have a sense
13 of how many of had to drop out of school because of
14 juggling coronavirus and childcare?

15 DEAN CLEARY: I don't have a number, but
16 what I can tell you is enrollments that several of
17 our campuses were up over the summer and up in the
18 fall. Some are down. Some enrollments are down.
19 And I can say, although it was a very small sample,
20 considering how large CUNY is, earlier in my
21 testimony when I talked about this project that we
22 launched full scale in January in that semester for
23 100 people, will my lost one student. So, one person
24 in a very targeted population. Now, I'm sure that
25 that is not indicative of CUNY's population and we

2 can surely try to find that out. But in the student
3 parent world at the campus childcare centers, one of
4 their direct charges is to not let go of people. And
5 so, we don't have data for this past semester, but
6 data across the country, about the campus childcare
7 centers ability to retain students in typical times
8 can be as high as 94 percent and there is another
9 place on campus that can boast that kind of retention
10 rate. So our goal with our directors is to make sure
11 that they fully appreciate their role in helping keep
12 people in. And so, of course, in the regular
13 wellness checks, one of the questions is often are
14 you able to continue to, you know, manage your
15 studies? Do you need help? Do you have a laptop?
16 Do you have a laptop with Wi-Fi? You know, many
17 students maybe do most of their online work in a
18 library and when the library is closed and then the
19 campus library closed, we became very, very worried
20 about who had, you know, internet. And so all those
21 questions come into play when the campus childcare
22 centers are doing their job.

23 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Okay. And last
24 question because I know we have parents waiting to
25 testify. I'm wondering has the University made a

2 decision about student activity fees? Whether or not
3 to waive them this year given that there are very few
4 student activities, but also my concern, too, is that
5 I know some of the childcare money comes from those
6 fees.

7 DEAN CLEARY: Right. So, I don't know what
8 the campuses have decided and quiche and I can
9 certainly try to find out get that back to you.

10 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Is that going to be
11 made college by college or by the University?

12 DEAN CLEARY: Well, I suspect it is a
13 central office decision.

14 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Yeah. Okay.

15 DEAN CLEARY: And we'll find out--

16 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Okay. Thank you
17 very much.

18 DEAN CLEARY: what the status of that is.
19 My pleasure.

20 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Chair Barron, thank
21 you for the courtesy. I appreciate it.

22 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: More than welcome.
23 More than welcome. Just one final question. The DOE
24 has protocols in place for determining if a student
25 should be sent home because they may be exhibiting

2 COVID-like symptoms and they also have protocols that
3 say if one child is sick for 14 days, the student and
4 staff in that classroom have to be quarantined and if
5 two children in different classes are sick, the whole
6 building is supposed to shut down. What are the
7 protocols regarding children who may be exhibiting
8 symptoms of having COVID?

9 DEAN CLEARY: Sure. So, per the video,
10 children are assessed before they even come in the
11 building and the night before their parents really
12 have to ascertain that their child has no symptoms.
13 Then they come to the building and they, again, are
14 assessed for symptoms.

15 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right.

16 DEAN CLEARY: If they have no symptoms,
17 there able to come. As we all know, child can
18 develop symptoms in the matter of an hour or so and
19 so, if they exhibit symptoms, they are sent home and,
20 yes, they can't come back until they are symptom-free
21 for 14 days. Depending on where the child was or
22 when they had symptoms, the program would make a
23 decision whether to close the classroom, close the
24 center. It would depend. But I think all of those
25 kind of guidelines come from the CDC and from the

2 Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the State
3 Department of Health. And the programs, the centers,
4 are required to abide by those guidelines and
5 requirements.

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Mr.
7 Zenegal, are there any members that have questions?
8 If not, this panel can be excused and we want to
9 thank you so much for your testimony.

10 DEAN CLEARY: You're welcome.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair
12 Barron. If there's any Council members that have a
13 question, please use the raise hand function in Zoom.
14 There being no raised hands, we've concluded
15 testimony for this panel.

16 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Is the
17 counsel now going to begin to call the public for
18 their testimony?

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes. Now that we
20 have concluded the administration's testimony, we
21 will now turn the public testimony. I'd like to
22 remind everyone that you will be on mute until I have
23 called on your name to testify. Once your name is
24 called, a member of our staff will unmute you and a
25 sergeant will give you the go-ahead to begin. Your

2 testimony will be limited to five minutes. Wait for
3 the sergeant to announce that you may begin before
4 you start your testimony. So, the next panel which
5 is, apparently, our last panel will be, in order of
6 speaking, Juvanie Piquant, CUNY University student
7 Senate, and Amber Rivero, President, John Jay College
8 student Council. Juvanie, you may make in your
9 testimony when the sergeant tells you it's okay to
10 begin.

11 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time begins now.

12 JUVANIE PIQUANT: Thank you. Good
13 morning, everyone. Good morning, Council member.
14 Good morning, Council member Helen Rosenthal. I
15 would just like to say thank you for setting up this
16 panel in this hearing for us. We've been waiting
17 here anxious. It's been a long year in the pandemic,
18 but we started the school year strong and I just want
19 to say thank you for giving me the opportunity for us
20 to share our concerns. Before I want to address
21 anything or my remarks that I want to say, I think--
22 I just want to thank Council member Helen Rosenthal
23 and Council member Barron for asking these tough
24 questions because I do believe there needs to be more
25 communication with the student leaders at CUNY. As

2 we were on this panel, I checked in with the student
3 trustee, Timothy Hunter, in regards to ask him if he
4 knew about this Student Parent Taskforce at CUNY and
5 he didn't know about. And, as student leaders, we
6 would like to know which student parents are on this
7 task force. This is a student trustee. He is a
8 member of the Board of Trustees. It's alarming that
9 he does not even know that this task force is going
10 on. And my colleague, Amber Rivera, she is also a
11 parent, so she will be talking, as well, about this
12 issue. But we are calling for more communication
13 with student leaders because we're the one that
14 disseminate that information to our students and we
15 have been hearing a lot of concerns about childcare.
16 But I just wanted to talk here today to discuss why
17 we're here. And there's a lot of racial injustice
18 and uproar that is going on in our nation, in our
19 institution that goes into our gender equity issues
20 and how do we see equality and justice for our
21 students. And when we talk about funding for higher
22 education, I think, when we talk about more resources
23 for mental health. A more inclusive opening this for
24 our trends students on our campus sees. Menstrual
25 equity is a huge issue. We met with Council member

2 Rosenthal many times last year to try to get pilot
3 programs on our campuses, but we do feel as if our
4 administration should be taking a more robust
5 approach in regards to that on our campuses. We're
6 calling on CUNY to provide more gender neutral
7 bathrooms on our campuses, more gender neutral
8 focused policies, more gender neutral focused service
9 for our students, therapy for students, counseling
10 for our students. Many students may feel as if they
11 don't know where to go. They don't know which
12 resources to go and I-- when Council member Barron
13 brings up our centralized marketing, that is really
14 big portion. CUNY, the federal government has
15 changed the Title IX policies and CUNY has worked
16 with us and we were part of those conversations. But
17 I do think a centralized marketing in regards to
18 others students who go beyond the CUNY student
19 leaders and CUNY are very important for us to be had
20 because it's not-- it's going to be the students and
21 become disenfranchised of these services, despite
22 being in a pandemic. Students are going through a
23 lot at home and we need to ensure that there are
24 services and they know where to go. Another thing I
25 would like to touch on is the support services.

2 Support services during COVID-19 is a huge, huge
3 issue within our institution as of right now. Many
4 students are saying that being at home, they
5 understand the pandemic, but what can we do? How can
6 we help? Students need places to study. Students
7 need services. Food insecurity is still a major
8 issue. Currently, my local student government on my
9 local campus at city Tech, we are figuring out a way
10 to get food to students on our campuses. Our
11 administration has been installing. We have been
12 trying to put this together ever since last year.
13 Timothy Hunter was the SGA president there. We had
14 pressed him. When we had our first hearing last year
15 with Toby Anstevitzki [sp?], senate of the Higher
16 Education Committee chair, and we at Brooklyn
17 College, discussed that food insecurity was huge
18 issue. And that has not been resolved. It is up to
19 our SGA now for us to figure out who is going to help
20 us get the food on campus-- how we're going to
21 disseminate that. It is all reliant on the student
22 government on that campus. And I, quite frankly,
23 don't think that is right. I think we need more
24 involvement in the administration. I think there
25 needs to be oversight with our CUNY administration to

2 understand the services that students have-- student
3 services that are having on each campus. Every
4 campus is different and we need to understand and
5 ensure that each student from each campus is
6 receiving the same services and qualities are at
7 least let's try to do it to diligence. Let's try to,
8 like Council member Inez Barron said, centralized
9 marketing tactic for is to ensure students know that
10 these services are there. Because, as we speak right
11 now, I'm hearing a lot of things about the child care
12 centers, the task force. I took some notes. Many
13 students don't know about these things and they are
14 concerned and they are going through a lot. And I
15 would say those students who are student parents
16 juggling class and also juggling a student at home
17 and trying to get--

18 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

19 JUVANIE PIQUANT: services from campuses
20 is extremely tough. And I yelled over to my
21 colleague, Amber Rivero.

22 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Juvanie, if you
23 have more-- and, Chair Barron, if it's all right
24 with you--

25 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes.

2 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Yeah. You can
3 continue. And were going to be asking you questions,
4 as well. But if you have more of your testimony
5 you'd like to share, please continue.

6 JUVANIE PIQUANT: Yeah. And thank you for
7 that. And also I would really like to talk about our
8 state of higher education. We know the pandemic is
9 in place. We know this semester is started, but we
10 have not heard notice on this tuition hike. This
11 mental health and wellness fee. It is extremely
12 alarming with the lack of announcement or lack of
13 notice for students. We are now about to be-- soon
14 near to be about a month away than this semester and
15 students deserve to know if the price of their
16 education will be rising on left field. Many
17 students had intentions of enrolling into this
18 semester with a certain price in mind and that can
19 instantly hike. And that is extremely, extremely
20 alarming being that a lot of students are dealing
21 with housing and food insecurity. And my colleague
22 and I-- and we share the same [inaudible 01:46:47]
23 that university student Senate. We are really
24 calling on oversight with CUNY to understand the
25 support services. To understand the state of the

2 students that they are in because many students have
3 enrolled in classes at CUNY for this semester, but
4 many students do not know how they are going to get
5 through those classes. And it is really reliant on
6 the student government to get students together to
7 understand these support services. And I must admit
8 that we are very overwhelmed. We are dealing with
9 school, but we are also trying to keep things afloat
10 and be the best leaders that we can be for our
11 students and we need our local campus administrations
12 to step it up. We need them to be a part of these
13 conversations and include them and us in these
14 conversations because I don't think it's fair that I
15 am hearing at a city Council hearing that we have a
16 task force for student parents and the trustee has
17 never heard of it. University student Senate has
18 never heard of it. SGA presidents have never heard
19 of it. And we have student parents who are student
20 leaders. We have student parents and are student
21 governments and in our institutions. And I really,
22 really encourage that conversation to be had and
23 there is some oversight there. And I yield my time
24 to Amber Rivero. Thank you.

25 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Thank you so much.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Ms. Rivero, you may
3 begin your testimony.

4 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

5 AMBER RIVERO: Thank you. Good
6 morning, Chair Barron and Chair Rosenthal, and all of
7 the committee members and Council members who are
8 here today. Thank you for allowing us to come and
9 testify. My name is Amber Rivero. I am a parent and
10 also a CUNY student. I am also proud of alumni
11 Medgar Evers College in Central Brooklyn and I am now
12 a senior at John Jay College of criminal Justice and
13 serving as president of our student government for
14 the college representing about 15,000 undergraduate
15 students within CUNY. And graduate students. Sorry.
16 A lot of what I'm going to share right now actually
17 testifies to the experience pre-COVID, so I can't
18 really attest to what is happening for parents during
19 COVID with childcare centers, but I am going to focus
20 on concerns that I had before COVID. As a parent, I
21 can attest to how helpful childcare can be for
22 students to be successful during their college
23 journey. However, at John Jay campus, the lack of
24 staffing and the lack of funding, allegedly, for the
25 John Jay childcare center has led to being very

2 minimal on the services that it can provide students.

3 So many students in our CUNY Edge program, which is

4 connected to HRA, are often single parents and young

5 parents. There is a high rate of lack of

6 participation and extracurriculars for students in

7 this program and I often see them having to take

8 their children to appointments for all of their

9 administrative and academic needs at the college,

10 which can be really tough and distracting. There is

11 also a low amount of space every single semester for

12 students to participate in the childcare center

13 services with their children, as most of the children

14 being cared for are from college staff. A certain

15 amount of funding for the childcare centers, I am

16 told, comes from student activity fees, as well. I'm

17 asking that the Committee on Higher Ed consider ways

18 to either provide more funding and support for CUNY

19 campus childcare centers or that a policy or

20 taskforce, similar to this oversight committee from

21 city Council, be charged with specific oversight on

22 the childcare centers to make sure that the public

23 funds and student activity fees are being used to

24 serve the students, not just CUNY employees. I would

25 love to actually know how many of those 1750

2 childcare slots that were mentioned earlier in the
3 Dean's testimony are actually serving students
4 children at CUNY. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you so much.
6 We appreciate you coming and offering your testimony.
7 And, Juvanie, once again, good to see you. And you
8 talked about food insecurity and we know that that is
9 a very important issue and we do want to
10 acknowledge-- I don't have the dollar amount in
11 front of me, but there was an initiative which the
12 Speaker funded from the Speakers pot which provided
13 money for the pantries that each of the CUNY
14 campuses. So, we don't know what that will be this
15 year, but we certainly appreciate and recognize that
16 it was much needed in terms of addressing the needs
17 of hunger. People like to fancy it up and say food
18 insecurity. It's hunger. That's an issue and it is
19 a disgrace that in this country that exists, but it
20 is, in fact, an issue that we have to address. So,
21 we are hoping that we will be able to look at how
22 that can be addressed and whether there is any
23 opportunity for any of this federal stimulus money
24 that has come or is, main further to be addressed for
25 that issue. To be directed to that issue for both

2 food and for childcare services. And you did raise a
3 very important question. You said that there are not
4 enough spots and, often times, the faculty and staff
5 have their children in spots that are allocated at
6 these campuses. And we will, in fact, include that
7 as a follow-up question to CUNY because I have always
8 been told-- we didn't raise the question this year,
9 or this hearing, rather, that we have been previous
10 hearings and we been told that first priorities for
11 students. So, what we can do now is to request
12 documentation. Request the data that gives us the
13 disaggregated attendance or enrollment for student's,
14 for faculty, for staff, and for community. Because
15 as always been said that priority goes to students
16 first and we want to make sure that we get the
17 numbers validate that. And in terms of your pursuit
18 of a degree, I want to encourage you. Glad to know
19 that you are at the senior college now. So, Amber,
20 did you go to Medgar for an Associates or did you,
21 just after a period of time, transfer from Medgar to
22 John Jay?

23 AMBER RIVERO: Yes. I actually got my
24 Associates Degree in public administration and then I
25 transferred to John Jay to pursue my Bachelor's.

2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. Good. So,
3 we will have our counsel follow up with that question
4 to CUNY admin to the central and I will turn it over
5 and out to Council member Rosenthal. Chair
6 Rosenthal.

7 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Thank you so much,
8 Chair Barron. And, you know, I really do want to
9 give a shout out to Dean Cleary for staying on with
10 us and hearing from--

11 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: the students
13 yourself. I'm not sure it is protocol, but if you
14 would like to answer Chair Barron's question now
15 about priority and numbers, if you have the data or
16 if you will need to get back to us on that, I think
17 that is really important. I don't know if the
18 Sergeants can unmute Dean Cleary. There we go.

19 DEAN CLEARY: Thank you. So, I've asked
20 Keisha to look at the numbers as soon as Amber said
21 that because each and every campus childcare center
22 and takes the great majority of its enrollment as
23 students and so I think that the data will bear out,
24 but I don't have it in front of me and Keisha is
25 working on it. So, if we get it before we end, I

2 will share it, otherwise we will certainly share it.

3 The other thing I would like to say is that the task
4 force is brand-new. Has not yet met. And, Amber, if
5 you email me, I would love to talk to you little bit
6 about it. And so my email is a CUNY email.

7 Sherry.cleary@CUNY.edu and we will spend the next
8 week thinking about which students, now that the
9 semester is back up and running, we will-- will be
10 adding considerably more students to the group. So,
11 you have not missed a thing. We are just starting
12 the actual meetings and maybe we will arrange for you
13 to serve. So, I don't want to put any pressure, but
14 we are looking for student participants. So, you're
15 actually right, Juvanie, that there should be
16 students on this group and there will be. So, as I
17 said, we've already recruited students, but we are
18 meeting next week to strategize how to make-- you
19 know, you can get a representative group at a place
20 as large as CUNY, so we have to be really thoughtful
21 about how do we involve students at several different
22 levels, one, on the taskforce, and then reaching out
23 and getting information from them. So both of you
24 are on the money and, Amber, I welcome you. And I'll
25 see you, Juvanie, to feel free to reach out to me.

2 I'm a pretty good responder. And so we will try to
3 get the numbers for you and I'll-- I don't want to
4 hold you up, so we'll get back to you.

5 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Great. Thank you,
6 Dean Cleary, for sort of addressing this right on the
7 spot. Juvanie, you know, is on the student senate.
8 I mean, both are, but so she can, you know, make sure
9 that Timothy Hunter is involved given that he is a
10 trustee and we really appreciate your openness to
11 this right on the spot. That's great. And to both
12 students, Juvanie and Amber, I mean, your leadership
13 here is extraordinary. I can't believe you're able
14 to do your classes and be such great leaders for your
15 school, for the students and communicating what you
16 are seeing, what you are experiencing of the latter.
17 That is so critical and you should both know you do
18 it extremely well. The other CUNY students are
19 really lucky to have you. I wanted to ask, actually,
20 Amber, but I get the feeling, because I know
21 sometimes you have to jump away for a second, but
22 Amber, if you're still around, but Juvanie, maybe you
23 can take a stab at this, as well. Just sort of your
24 sense from knowing your friends who are student
25 parents, do you get a sense of how the lack of

2 childcare affects your friends and whether or not you
3 know people who have had to step away from college
4 for a while because they did not have childcare
5 options?

6 JUVANIE PIQUANT: Well, I don't know
7 anybody specifically, that I met this one girl during
8 my time at university student Senate a couple months
9 ago. She did have to take some steps back from her
10 college experience at your college due to childcare
11 and a lack of financial hardships and just many
12 things overall. And I to have a colleague in my own
13 personal student government and she is so passionate
14 about getting this food pantry rolled out on campus
15 because she expresses how sometimes she doesn't eat
16 to ensure that her daughter eats. There is some
17 times that she doesn't know where she is going to get
18 food. And when we were on campus, we did have some
19 money from the [inaudible 01:58:02] grant that gave
20 us vouchers and we were able to go across the street
21 to get some food from the market or from our
22 cafeteria. Being that the campus is closed and this
23 is exactly what we are were afraid of, last year we
24 were pressing our administration. If we had a food
25 pantry distribution, no distributions could've been

2 done. The campuses I know are doing it right now.
3 You requested online. I believe BMCC has a great
4 mechanism of doing that. Students can request online
5 exactly what nonperishable items they would like and
6 then they set up an appointment to pick it up to make
7 sure that social distancing is in place, everything
8 is in order, and there is a schedule. And I think
9 that, on my campus, the lack of urgency of creating a
10 food pantry, as you mentioned, there was money to go
11 to a food pantry-- there is no physical pantry. If
12 you all go visit my campus as of right now, there is
13 nothing the administration can tell you, but there is
14 evidence that the students have been pushing for this
15 for months, way before the pandemic has come I now we
16 are still meeting with local or community
17 organizations to figure out how we're going to get
18 food on campus. And I would assure you and say that
19 parents, they're going through a lot. They are very
20 stressed. They don't know what is going to be their
21 next meal. They know they have to get through these
22 classes and the lack of support I feel like is slowly
23 deteriorating and deteriorating, you know, their
24 motivation and their urgency, you know, to continue
25 college. And we feel so helpless because simple

2 things such as hunger should not be an issue at an
3 institution--

4 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Of course.

5 JUVANIE PIQUANT: where we have leaders
6 who go on TV and say CUNY is less. These students go
7 for free and we have a food pantry and the reality is
8 that it is not. Our college president was aware that
9 there wasn't a food pantry because, after this
10 student trustee mentioned at a hearing, you spoke to
11 him. And it is now September 10th, 2020 and we still
12 don't have a food pantry.

13 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Hm. Yeah.

14 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Oh, Amber. We have
15 another guest with us. Hi.

16 AMBER RIVERO: Hi. Sorry. My children
17 were actually acting up in the background while you
18 guys were asking that question. So--

19 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: That's fine.

20 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: You just improved
21 today's hearing by 1 million percent.

22 AMBER RIVERO: Say hi.

23 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Hi. We're so happy
24 you're here. Thank you for joining us.

2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: I just want to say
3 that the city Council, we just want to knowledge,
4 that last year the speaker did fund an initiative for
5 food pantry and that was 1 million dollars and that
6 is, again, available and has been put into the budget
7 for this year for 1 million dollars. We want to
8 acknowledge that happening and we certainly want to
9 see what central can do to assist of those campuses
10 that do not have a food pantry, particularly in this
11 time of the pandemic and people really being
12 challenged. People having lost jobs and been very
13 restricted in their budgets. So, we want to ask CUNY
14 central what they can do to assist those campuses.
15 I've heard it. They are autonomous. They are,
16 perhaps, certain things that they are not required to
17 do, but I would think that, during this time, we need
18 to assist any campus that has genuine interest in
19 establishing a food pantry and doing that.

20 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Nice. And just as
21 a quick follow-up to that, Juvanie, you might want to
22 do a little research on the free freezers. This is
23 the new thing where people are sending out
24 refrigerators and the communities packing them with
25 food and they are popping up throughout the city.

2 Amber, while we have you and I know you are always
3 juggling beings of the parent, could I ask you is
4 there-- from your experience, what were the biggest
5 issues in terms of getting childcare CUNY and is
6 there anything CUNY could do to alleviate those
7 concerns? Are there any that we haven't mentioned
8 today that CUNY central could address?

9 AMBER RIVERO: I think, like I
10 mentioned, the CUNY Edge program is actually HRA
11 recipients and, you know, a lot of those students are
12 single parents or young parents. And so, our
13 childcare center John Jay, you are not allowed to
14 like dude drop ins and like you have to-- if your
15 child is enrolled in the childcare center, you have
16 till I give them your class schedule and then you
17 have, literally, five minutes to pick them up after
18 class ends. So there's no extra grace period to go
19 like to financial aid or to an advertisement or even
20 to like a career workshop to get your resume worked
21 on in case you're trying to apply for a job. And so
22 I've tried within the college to kind of push back on
23 the and ask why there is not a little bit more time
24 allotted, because it is very difficult to like talk
25 to your advisor and plan for your future find out

2 what is going on with your bursar hold while your
3 child is kind of like, you know, not busy and really
4 understand what you're doing. And I think that just
5 even like giving the extra support, right? If you
6 are paying for child care services, why do you have
7 to immediately pick your child up five minutes after
8 class? I don't think that the faculty and staff are
9 being required to do that after their work hours.
10 And I don't know if that is only John Jay specific.
11 I haven't talked to other childcare centers, but I
12 know when I was at Medgar Evers that I think it was
13 like, movie, five dollars-- 10 dollars a week for
14 parents. It was really affordable and it was just a
15 lot better policy structure for parents and staff and
16 I never heard of anyone complaining how the childcare
17 center wasn't conducive for parents to be able to go
18 to school at Medgar Evers was John Jay is a large
19 entity and he had I personally have never been able
20 to send my child there. So, I drop them off in
21 Brooklyn and then I travel an hour from South
22 Brooklyn and Manhattan and then I have to rush back
23 after classes or student government, right, to pick
24 him up. And it would've been nice if I would've been
25 able to utilize it, but how many other parents, you

2 know, just really need an hour to study or a time to
3 go to the library for exams and don't even have that
4 space? Why are they paying for child care and it's
5 not the same childcare that would be offered at a
6 private daycare with regular pre-K? I don't know
7 again if that is only John Jay specific, but that was
8 my personal take on struggles within.

9 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: That is very
10 helpful. Wow. Mute just at the perfect time. I saw
11 Dean Cleary taking notes and I'm sure she is going to
12 follow up about that. That is a critical insight
13 where the center is not meeting your needs. I think
14 it is because it's got you covered while you're in
15 class, but the truth of the matter is, as a student,
16 you have many other things that you need to spend
17 time on. So, if they really want to give you
18 comprehensive help, they need to be able to stretch
19 that window. So thank you. Thank you for that. You
20 know, I do just want to mention that the task force,
21 it sounds like it is critical. It's great that it is
22 starting. It's too bad it didn't start a long time
23 ago, but I really hope that an agenda item, very
24 important agenda item will be letting students know
25 what is happening. You know, we hear regularly of

2 the problem of communication between the school
3 administration and students and student leaders.
4 Whether it be childcare or last year, you know, even
5 setting the school down and kids being told they had
6 to evacuate the rooms and, you know, less than 24
7 hours. Communication is always the key to
8 implementing any program successfully and I really
9 hope there will be time devoted to the issue of
10 messaging, you know, what is the message? What is
11 the message at which campuses? How do we cover every
12 base? You know, snail mail, email, social media to
13 make sure that-- bulletin boards to make sure that
14 student parents know what's available for them. You
15 know, it's often the easiest thing, communication,
16 but, yet, it's the last thing so-- that anyone
17 thinks about. So, you may be making some brilliant
18 decisions in the task force, but they don't really
19 have any value if the information doesn't get to all
20 of the students. So thank you for bringing that up.
21 I think I'm about to wrap up. Chair Barron, you
22 know, certainly, the floor is yours, but to the
23 students, if there's anything that you would-- that
24 we haven't covered that you would like to talk about
25 a little bit more, you should feel free.

2 JUVANIE PIQUANT: I think we covered
3 everything so far. One thing I will make it our
4 business to do is follow up with you all to let you
5 know the status. I think we have some verbal
6 commitments on engaging students in this process and
7 we'll be sure to update the city Council, maybe,
8 monthly on how we think communication childcare is
9 going from the student perspective. I think it is
10 going to be very conducive because I've been, you
11 know, doing the student advocacy stuff for a year and
12 I truly feel like this is the year we need to get
13 things done actually. And I look forward to
14 working-- to sitting on the Student Parent Taskforce
15 along with Amber Rivero and we will rally up the
16 students. We know students will gladly be able to
17 provide their input and their experiences from many
18 various backgrounds. We can be sure to get you a
19 good handful of students. Amber just reached out to
20 me and she said she had to leave. She was late for a
21 meeting, but she says thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Sure. Sure. Sure.
23 Thank you for passing them out along. I know that
24 I've asked you this question before, but when are you

2 running for office? You know you have me there. I'm
3 ready to engage in your campaign.

4 JUVANIE PIQUANT: When you make sure the
5 academics are in order and we get the degrees that we
6 need to get in we do what we need to do, then we can
7 think of next things, but--

8 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: All right.

9 JUVANIE PIQUANT: we're students first and
10 we still have homework and classes to go to. So,
11 that's important.

12 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Fair. Fair good
13 point, but just remember. You have my sell.

14 JUVANIE PIQUANT: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: I'm there for you.

16 JUVANIE PIQUANT: Thank you, Council
17 member Rosenthal.

18 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you, Council
20 member Chair Rosenthal. And I echo the comments of
21 my colleague and, as-- Juvanie, as you talk about
22 this is the time to make a change, you referenced
23 earlier, I believe, in your testimony, that this
24 country is been a model of so many injustices and
25 inequities and people often times hear the phrase we

2 are all in this together and to that I say yes, but
3 were not all in the same kind of boats. Some of us
4 are in ocean liners. Some of us are in yachts. Some
5 of us are in sailboats or rowboats and some of us
6 only have lifejackets. So, what we've got to do is
7 use this opportunity to make sure that, as we go
8 through this storm and as we come out at the other
9 ends, that there is the equity that does not exist
10 now. We've got to raise our voices and share our
11 ideas about how to make that happen and it's not just
12 an education, but in all of the dynamics and all of
13 the social institutions and corporate institutions
14 and economic systems that exist, as well. And I did
15 find some references for one of the news programs
16 that had links for organizations that address the
17 issue of hunger. I think the program was Hunger in
18 America. And there are three websites that I would
19 like to share. One is for everyone. Eligible for
20 everyone and it is called feedingAmerica.org.
21 Another website is targeted specifically for children
22 and its website is nokidhungry.org.
23 And there is a separate site for veterans and that
24 site is feedourvets.org. So,
25 hopefully, that will be of assistance, as well. And,

2 at this point, there are no further formalities that
3 have to be conducted--

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We would just like
5 to ask if there's any Council members who have
6 questions--

7 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: please use the Zoom
9 raise hand function, if so. And seeing none, it
10 appears that we concluded public testimony for today.

11 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Having
12 said so, I will now adjourn this hearing. Thank you,
13 Council member Rosenthal for your--

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date September 13, 2020