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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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September 3, 2020  
Start: 10:34 a.m.  
Recess: 4:45 p.m.

HELD AT: REMOTE HEARING

B E F O R E: Mark Treyger,  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

- Alicka Ampry-Samuel
- Inez D. Barron
- Joseph C. Borelli
- Justin L. Brannan
- Robert E. Cornegy, Jr.
- Daniel Dromm
- Barry S. Grodenchik
- Ben Kallos
- Brad S. Lander
- Stephen T. Levin
- Mark Levine
- Farah N. Louis
- I. Daneek Miller
- Ydanis A. Rodriguez
- Deborah L. Rose
- Rafael Salamanca, Jr.
- Eric A. Ulrich

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A P P E A R A N C E S

1  
2  
3 Leanne Nunes  
4 Executive College Director of IntegrateNYC

5 Meril Mousoom  
6 Organizer from Teens Take Charge and Dignity in  
7 Schools

8 Gale Brewer  
9 Borough President of New York City

10 Robert Jackson  
11 NY State Senate

12 Michael Mulgrew  
13 UFT President

14 Mark Cannizzaro  
15 CSA President

16 Irwin Redlener  
17 Director of the National Center for Disaster  
18 Preparedness at Columbia University

19 Jessica Yager  
20 Vice President of Policy and Planning at WIN

21 Adam Grumbach  
22 Recently retired Principal from a consortium high  
23 school in New York City

24 Dr. Ramon Tallaj  
25 Chairman of the Board of SOMOS Community Care

Sophie Xu  
Rising High School Senior

William Diep and I'm a Rising High School Senior  
at the Brooklyn Modern School

Meghan Sciannameo  
Teacher at PS1 in Sunset Park Brooklyn in  
District 15

Liat Olenick  
Elementary School Teacher, Chapter Leader and  
MORE Member

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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

1  
2  
3 Kemala Karman

4 Tajh Sutton

5 Lisa Pines  
Teacher of art in District 75

6 Sheree Gibson

7 Tracy LaGrassa

8 Mariela Graham  
9 Parent of three New York City public school  
10 children

11 Ellen McHugh  
Co-Chair of the Citywide Council on Special  
12 Education

13 Gloria Corsino

14 Azalia Volpe  
15 Member of the Citywide Council of Special  
Education

16 Paulette Healy  
17 Member of the Citywide Council for Special  
Education

18 Johanna Garcia  
19 Previous CEC6 President as well as a member of  
PRESS NYC

20 Harlem McFall  
21 7<sup>th</sup> grader at UNMS Middle School in District 1

22 Christine Marinoni  
Speaking on behalf of Cynthia Nixon

23 Olympia Kasi[SP?]  
24 Speaking on behalf of Christine Marinoni

25 Tom Sheppard  
CC President's Appointee to the Panel for  
Educational Policy

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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

1  
2  
3 Shakira Oliver  
Math and science educator and a consultant and a  
4 parent in District 23 in Brooklyn

5 Atina Bazin  
6 District 28 Equity Now

7 Maryam Bencheikh-Ellis[SP?]

8 Christopher Hazelton

9 Kim Watkins

10 Jessica Kim  
High School Science Teacher in Manhattan

11 Richard Aguirre

12 Jenny Low

13 Chauncy Young  
14 New Settlement Parent Action Committee

15 Rachel Paguaga

16 Jazmin del Valle  
IEP Member for CEC6

17 Rob Roszkowski

18 MRM

19 Nancy Bedard  
20 Attorney with Brooklyn Legal Services

21 Robin Menikoff  
COVID-19 Accountability Working group

22 Ted Leather

23 Ilona Nanay  
24 Teacher and a Chapter Leader at Mott Hall V

25 Naomi Pena  
Proud District 1 parent of four children

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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

1  
2  
3 Ayishah Irvin

4 Faraji Hannah-Jones  
5 Proud public school parent

6 Hallie Yee  
7 Policy Coordinator at the Coalition for Asian  
8 American Children and Families

9 Shavonne Milliner

10 Rasheeda Harris  
11 Parent leader

12 Jessamyn Lee

13 Anna Meyer  
14 Teacher of 9<sup>th</sup> grade social studies

15 Janine Sopp

16 B. Kaiser  
17 Teacher in District 14 in Brooklyn

18 Sharmilee Ramudit  
19 Member of CEC3 and the Co-Chair of their Special  
20 Education Committee

21 Yuli Hsu  
22 CEC14 Vice President

23 Rachel Posner  
24 Parent of a 7-year-old, a teacher of 9<sup>th</sup> graders,  
25 a member of PRESS NYC and the MORE caucus

Kaliris Salas  
Parent of a Rising 4<sup>th</sup> grader at Central Park East  
One Elementary School

Tamara Gayer  
Mother of a Rising 5<sup>th</sup> grader in District 14

Joel Kupferman  
Represents the COVID-19 Accountability Working  
Group

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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

Olivia Swisher  
Middle school art teacher at Sunset Park

Matthew Sarker

Amy Breedlove  
Parent of a Rising 3<sup>rd</sup> grader at PS261

Deirdre Levy  
Special Education Teacher at PS9 in Brooklyn

Carolyn Tyner  
Educator in District 15 in Brooklyn

Travis Malekpour

Akelia Maitland  
Member of PS20 and School Leadership team

Elisa Crespo

Jane Maisel  
Teacher at the School of Education at City  
College

Mollie Bruhn

Lisa Bowstead  
Former DOE Teacher

Charesh Wald

Marilyn Moore  
Mother of three daughters

Nelson Mar  
Education Attorney at Bronx Legal Services

Carolyn Eanes  
English Teacher at a High School in Coney Island

1  
2 SERGEANT MARTINEZ: Sergeants you can begin your  
3 recordings. Mr. Sergeant Hope, I'll leave it to you.  
4 Thank you.

5 SERGEANT HOPE: Thank you sir. Once again, good  
6 morning and welcome to the New York City Council  
7 Remote Hearing on Education. At this time, we ask  
8 that all Council Members and Council Staff, please  
9 turn on your videos.

10 To minimize disruption, please place all  
11 electronic devices on vibrate or silent mode. If you  
12 wish to submit testimonies, please do so at  
13 [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov). I repeat,  
14 [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov).

15 Thank you for your kind cooperation. Chair  
16 Treyger, you may begin.

17 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you and my apologies  
18 to all for the delays this morning. And I'm  
19 officially [GAVEL] gaveling in this emergency hearing  
20 to hear my resolution on delaying school reopening  
21 and to address the serious safety concerns that we  
22 are hearing from students, from educators, parents,  
23 and school stakeholders.

24 Good morning, I am Council Member Mark Treyger,  
25 Chair of the Education Committee and I want to

1  
2 welcome everyone to today's remote hearing on a  
3 Resolution which I sponsor. Resolution 1410 calling  
4 on the New York City Department of Education to delay  
5 the reopening of public schools until each school  
6 meets the safety standards children and school staff  
7 require.

8 In the past year, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a  
9 devastating global impact with more than 25 million  
10 people infected by the virus worldwide and over  
11 850,000 deaths. The U.S. has been especially hit  
12 hard with over 6 million confirmed cases and rapidly  
13 approaching 200,000 deaths.

14 In addition to the pain and suffering of those  
15 who have lost loved ones, the virus has also had a  
16 devastating economic impact. With record  
17 unemployment rates leaving many households and many  
18 state and local governments near bankruptcy. The  
19 pandemic also lead to lockdowns and closures  
20 nationwide including school closures to help block  
21 the spread of the virus.

22 As cases of coronavirus cropped up in various  
23 communities across the U.S. included New York City,  
24 in February and early March of this year many  
25



1  
2 parents, advocates, and elected officials called for  
3 Mayor de Blasio to close city schools.

4 New York City public school buildings were  
5 initially closed to students on March 16<sup>th</sup> and to  
6 teachers on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, shifting the city's 1.1  
7 million students to remote learning, the remainder of  
8 the 2019-2020 school year.

9 On March 20, 2020, New York City was declared the  
10 epicenter of the coronavirus pandemic in the United  
11 States. The delayed shutdown of city schools exposed  
12 school staff and students to unacceptable risk. As  
13 of June 22, 2020, 79 DOE employees have died from  
14 COVID-19 related illnesses, including 31 teachers, 28  
15 paraprofessionals, 5 food service staffers, 4 central  
16 office employees, 3 school counselors, 2  
17 administrators, 2 school aids, 2 facility staffers, 1  
18 para coordinator and 1 school computer technology  
19 specialist. This number does not include other  
20 members of the school community who are not DOE  
21 employees, including bus drivers, school safety  
22 agents, crossing guards and others who lost their  
23 lives to coronavirus related illness.

1  
2           And of course, these numbers do not reflect the  
3 untold number of students who have lost family  
4 members and other loved ones.

5           It is because of these tragic losses that we must  
6 do all we can to prevent any further loss of life.  
7 School reopening decisions and protocols must be  
8 driven by public health and safety considerations.  
9 Schools cannot reopen for in-person instruction  
10 without having proper safeguards in place to protect  
11 our students and their families as well as school  
12 staff.

13           School districts in other states including  
14 Georgia and Indiana that opened their school  
15 buildings in August 2020 had to quickly change course  
16 and close their buildings due to widespread  
17 transmission of COVID-19. Similarly, a growing  
18 number of colleges and universities have had to  
19 revert to remote learning after the spread of COVID-  
20 19 during the first weeks of classes. Many colleges  
21 and universities have chosen to continue with all  
22 remote instruction, while some others that have in-  
23 person learning plans including Cornell and Syracuse  
24 University require that all undergraduate and  
25

1  
2 graduate students provide proof of a negative COVID-  
3 19 test result before returning to campus.

4 New York City is the only large school district  
5 in the country that is planning to reopen in school  
6 buildings for in person instruction this fall. While  
7 we are pleased that the city has now agreed to delay  
8 the reopening of school buildings until September  
9 21<sup>st</sup> of a modest delay, ten days of delay may not be  
10 enough time for families, teachers, and other school  
11 staff to prepare for this unprecedented school year.

12 I have some very serious outstanding concerns. I  
13 am concerned about students who are engaging in  
14 remote learning. There are still students without  
15 laptops and internet. How is the Administration  
16 going to address this before September 16<sup>th</sup> when  
17 remote instruction orientation begins. I'm concerned  
18 about the staffing level for remote learning. I've  
19 heard reports that students will be mixed from across  
20 schools inside of classrooms of up to 64 students, 64  
21 students. If that's true, how are teachers supposed  
22 to build relationships and provide individualized  
23 instruction to support 64 students? Beyond remote  
24 instruction, the city has not yet demonstrated that  
25 every school building has been evaluated and deemed

1  
2 safe and equipped with enough supplies and staff to  
3 curb the spread of the virus.

4       Of course, another huge outstanding issue is  
5 access to childcare. For students on hybrid  
6 schedules when they are not in school. The Mayor  
7 originally announced that by the start of the school,  
8 they would have 50,000 childcare seats to serve  
9 100,000 students and we don't know if they have  
10 reached that goal yet. Further, those numbers are  
11 far too low to meet the need, so how will they  
12 determine which students will have access to the  
13 limited number of childcare seats when so many  
14 parents must leave their children to go to work.

15       Six weeks ago, I proposed a phased in approach to  
16 a return to in-person learning starting later in the  
17 fall to allow schools to fully plan and program a  
18 safe reopening. I proposed that access to in-person  
19 instruction should initially be prioritized for those  
20 students whose academic and developmental progress is  
21 most dependent on the social environment and  
22 consistency of in-person education, including early  
23 childhood and elementary school students, as well as  
24 all students with IEP's, students in temporary  
25

1 housing, students in foster care, multilingual  
2 learners, and students in unsafe home environments.

3  
4 Three weeks ago, on August 12<sup>th</sup>, the city's  
5 school administrators represented by the Council of  
6 School Supervisors and Administrators, CSA delivered  
7 a letter to the de Blasio Administration questioning  
8 the lack of adequate planning for school buildings to  
9 reopen and requesting a delay to the start of in-  
10 person learning. One week later, at a press  
11 conference on August 19<sup>th</sup>, the United Federation of  
12 Teachers UFT President Michael Mulgrew, representing  
13 the teachers of our city indicated that while  
14 teachers prefer and want in-person learning,  
15 individual school buildings should not reopen on  
16 September 10<sup>th</sup> unless they meet stringent health and  
17 safety standards proposed by the union, including  
18 COVID testing for all staff and students.

19 Just this past Tuesday September 1<sup>st</sup>, the de  
20 Blasio Administration finally announced an amended  
21 plan in collaboration with the UFT, CSA, and DC37 to  
22 address concerns raised by the unions. Under the new  
23 plan, teachers will report to buildings on September  
24 8<sup>th</sup> as originally scheduled and will have dedicated  
25 time for training and collaboration or in blended

1  
2 learning. On September 16<sup>th</sup> orientation for students  
3 will begin remotely and schools will reopen for in-  
4 person learning on September 21<sup>st</sup>.

5 Although I introduced Resolution 1410, which  
6 calls on DOE to delay the reopening of public schools  
7 until each school meets the safety standards of  
8 children and school staff require, before this  
9 agreement was reached to delay school reopening, I  
10 felt it was important to go ahead with this hearing  
11 because so many unanswered question remain.

12 Though not required to testify in Resolutions, it  
13 is outrageous that the Administration has refused to  
14 send anyone to today's hearing to answer questions  
15 about their plan and address legitimate concerns of  
16 teachers and parents. This is not some frivolous  
17 exercise, there are lives at stake here. Lives of  
18 children and school staff and their families. We  
19 have an obligation to proceed with caution until all  
20 necessary safe guards are in place and all remaining  
21 questions around health and safety program operations  
22 and pedagogy answer.

23 I also made very clear, my committee in  
24 partnership with the Chair of the Health Committee  
25 Mark Levine, we're already planning on oversight

1 hearing in September, but I felt it was absolutely  
2 critical to have an emergency hearing before school  
3 reopening and to provide a platform for educators,  
4 students, and families to speak. And yes, the City  
5 Council does not have the legal authority to override  
6 the Mayor on the decision of school reopening. I  
7 still felt it was important to provide a platform for  
8 folks to speak and I will press ahead to continue to  
9 do that.  
10

11 And the Administration is trying to throw their  
12 protocol playbook, that they don't like to testify on  
13 Resolutions. This is not a normal year. We are not  
14 in normal times. If they strongly stand by their  
15 plan, come down to testify. Speak up about it,  
16 defend it because we will continue to do our  
17 oversight work. But I think it was important to give  
18 a platform for stakeholders to speak before school  
19 reopening and I am proud that the Council forged  
20 ahead to continue to provide a platform for folks to  
21 speak up.

22 I want to thank everyone who is testifying today  
23 and I want to thank the Council Staff for the work  
24 that they have put into today's hearing. Malcom  
25 Butehorn the Committee Counsel, Jan Atwell Policy

1  
2 Analyst, Kalima Johnson Policy Analyst. I just want  
3 to thank my Chief of Staff Anna Scaife, my Policy  
4 Director Vanessa Ogle, my Communications Director  
5 Maria Henderson, and Danielle Blake, a brilliant  
6 public school educator who has been a tremendous help  
7 to me over the summer as an intern.

8 I would like to also recognize the members of the  
9 Education Committee who are here and give me a  
10 moment, I will recognize them. Council Member  
11 Ulrich, Council Member Borelli, Council Member  
12 Barron, Council Member Rivera, Council Member Rose,  
13 Council Member Yeger, Council Member Rodriguez,  
14 Council Member Louis, Council Member Dromm, Council  
15 Member Cohen, Council Member Grodenchik, Council  
16 Member Lander, Council Member Ampry-Samuel, Council  
17 Member Levin.

18 And now, I will turn to Public Advocate Jumaane  
19 Williams for an opening statement as well.

20 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Thank you so much Mr.  
21 Chair and once again, thank you so much for all of  
22 your leadership on this from day one of the pandemic,  
23 even when the Administration themselves weren't  
24 showing leadership, so thank you.



1  
2 My name was mentioned Jumaane Williams, Public  
3 Advocate for the City of New York. I want to thank  
4 not only the Chair but all of the members of the  
5 Committee for holding this very timely and very  
6 important hearing.

7 This week, the Mayor announced the delay of  
8 starting the school year from September 10<sup>th</sup> to  
9 September 16<sup>th</sup> with the in-person instructions  
10 beginning on September 21<sup>st</sup>. While I'm glad the  
11 Mayor has heeded mine and others call to delay  
12 reopening, an 11 day delay in-person learning is not  
13 enough to guarantee that our students, teachers,  
14 school administrators will not be at risk of  
15 contracting the coronavirus. Chair Treyger's  
16 Resolution, Reso. 1410 calls on our city's Department  
17 of Education to delay the reopening of public  
18 schools, until each school meets the safety standards  
19 children and school staff require.

20 I wholeheartedly support this resolution because  
21 I believe our approach to reopening should be  
22 grounded in science and executed in equity to  
23 safeguard the health of our school staff, students,  
24 their families, not to mention the entire city.

1  
2 In July, my office released a white paper on the  
3 reopening of New York City Schools. It tracks the  
4 phasing plan of Chair Treyger as well. In which I  
5 recommended the city to invest in remote learning and  
6 delay in-person schooling by at least six weeks.

7 A timeline already implemented by several of the  
8 nations other large school districts, including Los  
9 Angeles, Atlanta, and Houston. My report laid out a  
10 series of stages for successful healthy reopening of  
11 schools in our city. The first stage included the  
12 expansion of regional enrichment centers or REC's to  
13 accommodate childcare needs, with a five day solution  
14 for working parents and guardians and incorporate a  
15 plan for students with individualized education plans  
16 or IEP's, special needs students in temporary housing  
17 and multilingual learners.

18 Most important, stage one is to use the funding  
19 to ensure medically advised and community informed  
20 health and safety measures can be not only initially  
21 met but sustained.

22 Second, if the number of new COVID-19 admissions  
23 continue to decrease, the Administration could  
24 consider allowing families the ability to opt to  
25 return elementary school students to in-person

1  
2 learning beginning in October. Older students will  
3 remain at home allowing elementary students whose  
4 families opted for in-person learning to use the  
5 space at empty middle schools and high schools.

6 The third stage of reopening comes around the  
7 middle of the school year, when we evaluate our  
8 progress and any potential hot spots to determine if  
9 it is safe to return to in-person learning for  
10 students of all grades. The city will come up with a  
11 plan for the second half of the 2021 school year and  
12 we will only transition to a full reopening for  
13 students of all ages and grade levels with the  
14 approval of health experts.

15 Our city's handling of remote learning has had  
16 its flaws but it still remains our safest option at  
17 the moment. The Department of Education needs to  
18 improve the way it operates remote learning by  
19 ensuring that all students have access to the  
20 technology they need. We've had three months to make  
21 sure that all students, especially those in temporary  
22 housing or shelters have iPads, tablets, and any  
23 other remote learning devices needed to engage in  
24 virtual classroom sessions and the internet access  
25 that's needed to get that done.

1  
2 This time has also allowed our city to determine  
3 how additional funds will be invested more  
4 strategically to students who need in-person  
5 learning, such as those with IEP's and students with  
6 disabilities.

7 The city must change its thinking, away from  
8 focusing on a date and instead focus on accommodating  
9 the most vulnerable students and families first and  
10 building the needed health infrastructure in our  
11 school communities to ensure a safe return.

12 By utilizing in-person learning again, we are not  
13 only putting our students and school staffers at  
14 risk, as I mentioned, New York City as a whole and  
15 possibly the nation because at the beginning, I do  
16 believe the way New York City handled its corona  
17 issue with the lack of leadership, probably exposed  
18 other people going to other states.

19 Those returning in-person instruction will be  
20 taking mass transit and subsequently be in the  
21 proximity of commuters. We cannot afford to gamble  
22 with the health of our students by permitting in-  
23 person learning before our schools already. I urge  
24 the Administration to consider delaying the start of  
25 in-person learning until October and further

1  
2 prioritize remote learning for all of our schools.  
3 No one is denying that in-person learning is best.  
4 We only have not so good options. We have to choose  
5 the best of those. Sadly, the Administration has  
6 chosen the worst of those.

7       And lastly, I just want to say thank you to the  
8 Chancellor and even to the Mayor. I have had many  
9 discussions and they have been open to it, but I am  
10 appalled that they refuse to come and have a  
11 discussion with the Council, so we can have public  
12 discourse on this. This is what people need right  
13 now. They can't get the information from a sound  
14 body and to use the excuse that you don't comment on  
15 Resolutions, it's to try to devalue the City Council.  
16 Because of this set up, many people in the public  
17 don't know the Mayor has most of the power. Most of  
18 the things that are put forth on education through  
19 the Education Committee will be by Resolution. I  
20 think it's unacceptable that they wont come when  
21 there is no pandemic. It's certainly unacceptable  
22 that they wont come during a pandemic so we can have  
23 this discussion out in the open and people who are  
24 confused, worried, and scared, can see what's  
25 happening and why. And so, the Administration should

1  
2 be ashamed that they are not here today to discuss  
3 this most important topic.

4       So, thank you Mr. Chair for the time. I look  
5 forward to the rest of the discussion.

6       CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you Public Advocate  
7 and I agree with you wholeheartedly. We're not in  
8 normal times and they sound so confident when they  
9 speak at their press conferences about their plans  
10 and proposals. And they should have no problem  
11 coming down to the virtual council, the virtual  
12 people's house to speak about their plans and  
13 proposals. To provide the clarity and transparency  
14 that the public deserves.

15       And I also just want to just say something that I  
16 feel is important to share and those who are involved  
17 in school communities know exactly what I'm talking  
18 about and those of my colleagues who are teachers,  
19 who work in schools know what I'm talking about. As  
20 a former teacher, I want to point to a moment in a  
21 school year. The start of each school year or the  
22 start of the new semester, if you work in a high  
23 school, when you meet your first class, when you meet  
24 your class, before you ask students to open a  
25 notebook, you have to first establish trust. You

1  
2 cannot overlook that moment. You have to first  
3 establish a safe and supportive learning environment  
4 for every child in that class and kids are really  
5 smart. They are brilliant, they sense when  
6 somethings up and I think it's important for the  
7 public to be aware that that trust has been broken.

8       When the Mayor had the audacity to lecture  
9 educators about being professional, he is in no  
10 position to lecture anyone about being professional.  
11 When he asked educators and students and staff to  
12 walk into buildings and march, knowing that it was  
13 not safe. So, I just want to make it clear that that  
14 trust has been broken and that trust has not been  
15 repaired. So, educators are not just speaking up on  
16 behalf of their profession, they are speaking up on  
17 behalf of their students and of their entire school  
18 community because teachers are only one part of the  
19 school.

20       We have extraordinary school food workers,  
21 crossing guards, school safety, you name it, who have  
22 been working throughout this entire pandemic as well  
23 feeding our families across the five boroughs.  
24 Educators, even though the buildings were physically  
25

1  
2 closed have still reached out to try to deepen  
3 connections even in this era of physical distancing.

4 Principals have not had a day off this summer.  
5 Work around the clock under impossible circumstances  
6 with inadequate information. The theme for  
7 principals this summer has been guidance forthcoming,  
8 which is code word for they have no plan. This has  
9 been a planning failure on the part of the  
10 Administration and schools have been forced to plan  
11 for the impossible with inadequate resources, time,  
12 and information.

13 So, I think it's important to get that out there  
14 as we proceed and just to say thank you to all of our  
15 education family members who have been doing  
16 courageous work. I also want to just acknowledge  
17 we've also been joined by Council Member Kallos and  
18 also Council Member Rosenthal and I want to recognize  
19 that Council Member Barron raised her hand and she is  
20 an educator as well who I have much respect for  
21 principal educator and Council Member Barron, if you  
22 would like to say a few words.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you very much. I  
24 want to give acknowledgement to the Chair for calling  
25 this extremely important hearing to look at this



1  
2 Resolution that is being introduced. I also want to  
3 thank all of my colleagues for joining and hearing  
4 from those who are most impacted by this, so that we  
5 can move forward in an informed way.

6 I too, am extremely disappointed that the Mayor  
7 himself or his representative, the Chancellor did not  
8 come and sit with us in this environment to talk  
9 about what the plans are.

10 I have said from the beginning that based on  
11 history, we can expect a resurgence in October and I  
12 felt that we should continue the remote learning  
13 until after this resurgence and then look to have the  
14 in-class teaching instruction. I think the plans  
15 that have been laid out look to that kind of setting  
16 but I think that it is inappropriate to start it at  
17 this time.

18 I also think that there should have been  
19 additional resources and I've said this to the  
20 Chancellor, that were offered to parents during this  
21 time of their children being in a remote learning  
22 environment. Just as Council Member Treyger, you and  
23 I know, teachers are deep into their pockets  
24 throughout the year to support what goes on in the  
25 classroom. I think that the Department of Education

1  
2 should have designed some type of guidance of what  
3 kinds of support and instructional and hands on  
4 materials parents could get and that they should have  
5 provided that in some type of financial assistance  
6 for them to purchase it or have provided to them  
7 directly. That did not happen. We cannot rely just  
8 on a screen and the instruction via the staffing.  
9 The teachers and assistant principals and all of  
10 those persons to get our children motivated.

11 This is a very stressful time. I can't imagine  
12 what it must have been like to not be at that first  
13 day and greet your students as Council Member Treyger  
14 has talked about. It's such an important day and for  
15 the first day not to have happened in its usual  
16 format is a little disturbing and depressing but we  
17 have to move forward.

18 I agree with all that's been said about making  
19 sure that all of the technology for all of the  
20 students, if there are five in a family, five  
21 functioning devices with adequate access and that we  
22 have to make sure that when we do open the schools,  
23 we have to be guaranteed. We have to be able to see  
24 records and documentation that everything that was  
25 said in terms of the staffing numbers and in terms of

1  
2 securing the safety of the physical building have in  
3 fact been met with a check off, so that we can verify  
4 that that's what happened.

5       So, I want to thank you for calling this hearing.  
6 Thank all of those who are here, we want to hear from  
7 you to help inform how we will proceed with opening  
8 of schools.

9       Thank you very much.

10       CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you Council Member  
11 Barron. I also recognize that Council Member Stephen  
12 Levin has his hand up. Council Member.

13       COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member Levin, give us  
14 one moment, we're having trouble unmuting you.

15       Okay, Chair, we're having issues with that, so we  
16 will come back to Council Member Levin. I am going  
17 to go ahead and read the procedures, since we will be  
18 moving straight into public testimony.

19       CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Okay.

20       COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chair Treyger. I  
21 am Malcom Butehorn, Counsel to the Education  
22 Committee of the New York City Council.

23       Before we begin public testimony, I want to  
24 remind everyone that you will be on mute until you  
25 are called on to testify. After you are called on,

1  
2 you will be unmuted by the host. I will be calling  
3 on persons to testify in panels of four, so please  
4 listen for your name to be called. I will be  
5 announcing in advance who the next panel will be.

6 I would like to remind everyone that unlike our  
7 typical Council hearings, while you will be placed on  
8 a panel, I will be calling individuals to testify one  
9 at a time.

10 Council Members who have questions for a  
11 particular panelist should use the raised hand  
12 function in Zoom. You will be called on in the order  
13 with which you raised your hand after the full panel  
14 has completed their testimony. We will be limiting  
15 Council Member questions to three minutes including  
16 both questions and answers. Please note that for the  
17 purposes of this virtual hearing, we will not be  
18 allowing a second round of questioning. Thank you.

19 For panelists, once your name is called, a member  
20 of our staff will unmute you and the Sergeant at Arms  
21 will give you the go ahead to begin after setting the  
22 timer. All public testimony will be limited to two  
23 minutes. We have more than 140 people signed up to  
24 testify today and in the interest of fairness to all  
25

1  
2 who will be waiting, we ask that everyone please  
3 limit their testimony to two minutes.

4 Please listen carefully and wait for the Sergeant  
5 to announce that you may begin before delivering your  
6 testimony as there is a slight delay. The first  
7 panel that we will be calling up will be Leanne Nunes  
8 and Meril Mousoom. Leanne?

9 LEANNE NUNES: Good morning everyone. My name is  
10 Leanne Nunes.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

12 LEANNE NUNES: And I am the Executive College  
13 Director of IntegrateNYC. COVID-19 hit during my  
14 last semester of high school, a week before schools  
15 closed. I was surprised to see that we finally had  
16 fully stocked soap and toilet paper in our bathrooms  
17 and that it took a global pandemic for it to happen.

18 Now, here we are months later and the building I  
19 virtually graduated from is in the same if not worse  
20 condition. There are six schools in the building  
21 with our larger facilities in the basement. Our  
22 cafeteria auditorium and gym spaces have no windows  
23 and poor ventilation, making them unusable for  
24 spreading out larger classes.

1  
2 Half of the classrooms on our floor don't have  
3 windows actually and the issue of poor ventilation  
4 persists throughout the building in the other five  
5 schools.

6 My high school campus is not a one off  
7 occurrence. There are many schools across the city  
8 in similar conditions that are at a loss as to how  
9 they will be able to ensure the health and safety of  
10 their students and staff. The DOE proposal is simply  
11 not possible for many schools in the NYC DOE that  
12 lack the space and funding to fulfill the capacity  
13 needs required for safe social distancing. The plan  
14 is also largely inaccessible for many low income  
15 working families of color as well as many students  
16 with disabilities.

17 Promoting hybrid learning on display is putting  
18 many youth and their families at risk. Low income  
19 communities of color has been carrying us through  
20 this pandemic and have been the driving force of this  
21 city even before we all knew COVID-19 was going to be  
22 a thing.

23 The options for scheduling that currently exists  
24 would not work within a working families capacity,  
25 especially if there were multiple children in the

1 household. The criteria being used is not reflective  
2 of COVID-19's disproportional impact across the city  
3 and the strain it has had on low income families we  
4 call essential when we need something delivered is  
5 high.  
6

7 These families are essential in their service but  
8 not when the futures of their children are at risk.  
9 All we need is for schools to stay closed until it is  
10 safe for everyone, not just some.

11 We as a city need to make sure students have the  
12 guidance and resources to learn during remote  
13 learning without the added risk of harm to themselves  
14 or loved ones.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You can go ahead and finish,  
17 I see the Chair nodding his head.

18 LEANNE NUNES: Thank you so much. We recognize  
19 that some schools will benefit from in-person  
20 learning but we also recognize the citywide harm that  
21 school reopening at this time would cause.

22 We need to prioritize the most vulnerable during  
23 this time and make it safe for them to learn as well.  
24 We cannot go back anytime soon, not until it is safe  
25 for everyone.

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I am done.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and next we will hear from Meril.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

MERIL MOUSOOM: My name is Meril Mousoom. I am a 16-year-old organizer from the groups Teens Take Charge and Dignity in Schools. I have also been working with the groups Movement of Rank and File Educators and Press NYC.

The thing that comes to mind with the school reopening is anger. Anger that low income kids like me will be left behind either way because our schools don't have the money to provide devices and internet access and in trying to reopen, the city neglected remote learning.

Anger that my learning is at stake because of teacher shortages since teacher problems are student problems. Anger at our schools not being given enough time and resources to implement outdoor learning despite it being the clearer, safer alternative.

Anger at the lack of socioemotional learning plans. The cut to guidance counselors and social workers that will drive our generation to despair and



1  
2 suicide. Anger at the fact that my fellow parents,  
3 my fellow students, my parents don't know anything  
4 about the nurse shortages that will kill us.

5 Anger at our questions about PPE, testing,  
6 ventilation, remaining unanswered. Anger at everyone  
7 who tells us students to go back to school in person  
8 from their Zoom forums. Anger at being seen as  
9 nothing more than a prop to reopen the economy, a  
10 dollar sign, not a person. Anger at knowing that  
11 this experiment that was set up to fail from the  
12 start will culminate in a generation starved of care  
13 and education and graveyard full of dead bodies.

14 Anger at knowing that there is an alternative, a  
15 better plan for my education for my future to further  
16 delay reopening but that is not happening yet.

17 Because students, educators, and parents have yet to  
18 be heard.

19 Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Wow. If there is like a  
21 way to do a virtual or in the Council we do like the  
22 spirit hands. That was extraordinary. Thank you and  
23 I'm going to borrow that phrase if you don't mind,  
24 that teacher problems are student problems. Thank  
25 you, thank you, thank you. I appreciate both the

1  
2 amazing students. I wanted to hear students first to  
3 center you and I really, really appreciate your  
4 courage and sticking up for your entire school  
5 families. Thank you so much.

6 I know that I've been informed that Council  
7 Member, just making sure, Malcom, who is the next  
8 panel afterwards or anymore Council Member's hands  
9 up?

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member Levin, we will  
11 try one more time.

12 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Okay.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: If we can unmute Council  
14 Member Levin.

15 Okay, I think he may have stepped away. So, the  
16 next panel - I'm having a technical issue myself, one  
17 moment.

18 The next panel will be the Honorable Gale Brewer  
19 and the Honorable Robert Jackson and we will begin  
20 with the Borough President.

21 GALE BREWER: Thank you very much. I'm just  
22 going to summarize Mr. Chair and then I'll submit  
23 later, but I have been meeting with Executive  
24 Superintendent, CEC's, and Para's just like you and I  
25 just want to say in the Borough of Manhattan, I'm

1  
2 just going to summarize the many concerns that you  
3 know only too well.

4 Just in terms of PPE, the parents ask and the  
5 custodians ask, they point out the guy with the  
6 shorts. You know, spraying the COVID killer, you've  
7 got to have on a gown, a massive mask, etc. They  
8 don't have that the custodians. We know all the  
9 parents are concerned about 30 day PPE, is that real?  
10 Kids are supposed to bring masks. Parents don't have  
11 masks. Temperature, are they going to be giving it  
12 out? When? All those kinds of issues.

13 Number two, just adequate testing, and tracing,  
14 you know the questions. I know that some people in  
15 the government are doing the 75 percent accurate  
16 instant test. Is that what DOE is going to do or are  
17 we doing the 24 hour turn around, is that going to  
18 happen? And of course, you know if somebody is sick,  
19 24 hours is often too long. If you got mandatory  
20 testing, is that going to happen for the family of  
21 the student and the teacher who is sick or is it  
22 free?

23 All of those questions and of course October  
24 sometimes it was too long to be able to start. Keep  
25 our nurses hired, even the ones that have been hired,

1  
2 they have not been informed of the random testing  
3 procedures. I have great confidence in custodians as  
4 you do but I know one school I know well, the Martin  
5 Luther King Educational Campus on the upper west side  
6 could never, ever be ready. I don't care what you do  
7 to it. 324 Washington Heights or CPE in East Harlem  
8 and I could go through others that all have the same  
9 issue. The parents want to know, is the air quality  
10 report, even if other schools will be made public by  
11 the independent inspectors.

12 All the issues of social emotional, I've been  
13 talking about social workers, you've been talking  
14 about social workers, I don't know how many and I  
15 don't even know if there is enough guidance  
16 counselors.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

18 GALE BREWER: I understand the teachers have been  
19 trained. So, those are the issues, just to bring up  
20 some. I just want to say in terms of just quickly,  
21 in terms of devices, we put in money, the Mayor will  
22 expend it and that's another challenges. Buses,  
23 outdoor space, teacher sorted and what are these  
24 learning centers really supposed to do? They don't

25

1  
2 know. I love the REC's; I would just go with REC's  
3 if I were in charge.

4 Thank you very much.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And next we will hear from  
6 Senator Robert Jackson.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

8 ROBERT JACKSON: Thank you. Well, I have a lot  
9 to say and I have two minutes because I know you have  
10 over 120 people on this Zoom conference. Can you  
11 hear me, yes?

12 Okay, so, regarding the development around school  
13 reopening, we know that that is fast and furious and  
14 things are changing, so we have to have flexibility  
15 and back up plans in order to get things done.

16 Obviously, this resolution put forth by Chair Treyger  
17 at 1410, takes stock of where we are now because  
18 schools have been delayed. A lot of people are  
19 saying that's not enough time and I say to you, I  
20 have talked to labor union leaders, leadership about  
21 schools were not ready. ATU Local 1181, who  
22 thousands and thousands of employees mainly people of  
23 color that depend on the yellow buses for our  
24 students. No one is talking about that. What about  
25 all these children that are riding the yellow school

1  
2 buses and all of the employees. They have not been  
3 called back. The policy of DOE and the Mayor and not  
4 coming into hearings and speak about Resolutions is  
5 totally unsound and without merit. Let me just say  
6 that because what the City Council is going to be  
7 moving forward on a Resolution to the state  
8 legislature about borrowing \$5 billion to avoid  
9 layoffs. Hello? Let's get real.

10 People want to hear what you have to say even if  
11 you disagree with their position and you need to hear  
12 what people have to say in a formal setting. So, I  
13 support this Resolution wholeheartedly. I think that  
14 knowing all of the situations, even at the panel for  
15 Educational Policy, when I asked a question. So,  
16 they are holding up 20 percent of the education  
17 funding. How much is that? You know, what the Chair  
18 of the Policy of Education panel said? We don't  
19 respond to questions. We just listen. Hello? This  
20 is a dialogue.

21 But the director of Finance came on and said, the  
22 20 percent held up -

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

24 ROBERT JACKSON: Is \$2.4 billion. We need to  
25 talk about these things and we need to have the

1  
2 Mayor's Office and the Chancellors Office involved in  
3 these discussions along with the unions and parents  
4 and everyone else.

5 Thank you Chair Treyger. Thank you for  
6 listening.

7 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And thank you Senator  
8 Jackson, who is one of the most courageous, bold,  
9 leaders we have. Not just in the city, the whole  
10 state of New York, you were an education champion  
11 from day one. Thank you for your courage and for  
12 always having our kids backs.

13 Thank you Senator.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member Kallos has  
15 questions for the panelists.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Thank you. I want to  
18 just start with joining Chair Mark Treyger and Public  
19 Advocate Jumaane Williams and my anger and  
20 disappointment with the Mayor and Department of  
21 Education for failing to show up. They are getting  
22 marked absent today. They are getting an F on  
23 today's pop quiz and that's just putting it lightly.

24 There are so many people including the teacher  
25 and student that we heard from today who are just

1  
2 concerned about what the city's plan to reopen is and  
3 they need to show up. And I have a question for the  
4 Borough President Gale Brewer as well as Senator  
5 Robert Jackson. To the Borough President, you made  
6 reference to technology. If you could please develop  
7 that. Are you referring to the fact that you buy  
8 technology, such as laptops for schools and we  
9 actually have done that jointly and there are no  
10 telling schools they cannot buy laptops and then send  
11 it home with the kids.

12 And to Senator Jackson, we've had families asking  
13 how are they going to get to school and we've sent  
14 letter and so, which ever wishes to answer first, but  
15 do we even have a plan for how kids are going to get  
16 to school safely?

17 ROBERT JACKSON: Go ahead Gale. Then I'll go.  
18 So, the thing is, they have to be called back. They  
19 have to be trained. Everyone is in a new COVID-19  
20 stage. So, they have not been trained and what about  
21 all of the kids, tens of thousands of kids that use  
22 yellow buses. No one is saying how they are going to  
23 get to school and what's going to happen with them.  
24 That's number one.

25



1  
2 I am so happy that the Administration agreed to  
3 have a nurse in every school building. I'm so happy  
4 that they agreed to have two teachers in every  
5 classroom. One for in class, one for virtual.  
6 That's a good thing. All of that costs money and so,  
7 to talk about your needs are very important overall.

8 So, I look forward to them coming up to Albany to  
9 discuss with us what their needs are and why they  
10 need it, and what they are going to do with it to  
11 avoid layoffs.

12 GALE BREWER: In terms of devices Council Member,  
13 yes, we work together on this. My understanding from  
14 yesterday with DOE is that there are 20,000 devices  
15 available citywide, that's it. And the  
16 Superintendents are tracking current and incoming  
17 students who may need them but we know that there  
18 will be many more than 20,000 in terms of the need.  
19 The issue of course is they break, they go last, etc.

20 Number two, the issue of remote, everyone is  
21 going to need remote no matter what program you are  
22 in and we don't know how many places have filled  
23 because we have none that kind of work. What kind of  
24 planning has been done in terms of internet access.

1  
2 In terms of funding, as you saw in the New York  
3 Post, I allocate funding as you do. Every single  
4 year but guess what, last year's money \$12 million in  
5 my case for technology, for ventilation, for the gym  
6 has not been paid. The Mayor will not release that  
7 funding. I don't know if that's true going across  
8 but it is killing the Manhattan public schools.

9 So, on many levels, this hybrid remote learning  
10 will not work if we don't have the right devices,  
11 internet connection and of course the academics to go  
12 with it. Right now, I do not see a sufficient supply  
13 of devices, not to mention everything else.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: I want to thank both of  
15 the elected officials for their advocacy and ask that  
16 the education Chair and Committee pass these concerns  
17 along as well as everything else we are going to hear  
18 today.

19 Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Oh, thank you Council  
21 Member and absolutely. I think we have been beating  
22 the drums and I also want to thank Borough President  
23 Brewer who has always been a champion supporter of  
24 our schools and yeah, Reso. A1A is being held up,  
25 which is a concern and I just want to give some

1  
2 updates to folks because I'm in touch just like  
3 everyone else is with principals and educators that I  
4 am being told that when principals are calling the  
5 DOE to request additional iPad devices, they are  
6 being told to hold up and to look in their budgets  
7 first to see if they can purchase them.

8       So, even if the DOE has 20,000 or so iPad's left,  
9 they are not giving them to schools. That at least  
10 have reached out to ask for them. Additionally,  
11 children living in shelters, even if they have a  
12 device, some of the shelters have a very weak or no  
13 signal to log on to internet. And that's inhibiting  
14 their ability to receive instruction.

15       Also, as a teacher, I could tell you there is  
16 something called devices break and there is something  
17 called maintenance required. There is no plan to my  
18 knowledge for the maintenance and up keep of these  
19 devices and whether there is adequate bandwidth to  
20 run these platforms and programs.

21       So, to this date, there are a number of students  
22 who do not have laptops and also, if you have a  
23 laptop, it doesn't mean that you have internet on it.  
24 That means you need internet accommodations. So, to  
25

1  
2 my knowledge, there is not a plan to provide internet  
3 for all kids who need it.

4 So, you know, the Administration was so focused  
5 on trying to get things ready for in-person. Remote  
6 learning is no where near ready and it's unclear what  
7 they have been doing this entire time and they should  
8 have been using this time to do a technology check to  
9 make sure that every kid from every zip code has the  
10 technology and internet they need because regardless  
11 of whatever model, remote learning is a part of the  
12 program.

13 So, this is not new. This was not breaking news.  
14 And so, they are not ready even for remote learning.  
15 So, I thank the Borough President and the Senator for  
16 highlighting those points and for their advocacy even  
17 before this year on these issues as well.

18 Thank you very much. I also want to recognize  
19 that we've been joined by Council Member Justin  
20 Brannan as well. And with that, I'll turn it back to  
21 Malcom.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now move  
23 to our next panel. Michael Mulgrew and Mark  
24 Cannizzaro. We will start with Michael Mulgrew.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

1  
2 MICHAEL MULGREW: Good morning everyone and thank  
3 you so much to Councilman Treyger and to the City  
4 Council and to this Committee for all the work that  
5 we are doing here. We have heard from many of our  
6 speakers. We all understand that we are facing one  
7 of the greatest, if not the greatest challenge our  
8 school system has ever faced.

9 The whole world is looking at the New York City  
10 public school system, not just the country, the  
11 entire world is now looking at our school system.  
12 Over the next weeks, we're going to try to get a lot  
13 of the problems that have been already spoken about  
14 here, get them to a place where those questions are  
15 answered and things are working but we have no  
16 guarantees that that is going to be the actual  
17 situation.

18 The agreement or really it wasn't, it is not a  
19 collective or bargaining agreement that we reached  
20 with the City of New York. What we did was, we  
21 reached an agreement on amending the state plan. If  
22 it were a collective bargaining agreement, anything  
23 inside of it would be subject to agreements and  
24 arbitration process which we could not -- which would  
25 be completely ineffective. Because if there is a

1  
2 problem anywhere, we need to be able to move swiftly.  
3 We're not talking days; we're talking in hours.

4 So, the state plan has now been amended and  
5 because the state plan is basically a legal document  
6 that has been attested to by the Department of  
7 Education, that attestation means that they are  
8 saying and guaranteeing that everything in the plan  
9 is happening in every school in New York City.

10 So, now that becomes our challenge to hold this  
11 Administration's feet to the fire. If something is  
12 not in place and happening in the school, we need to  
13 use our legal authority to get it stopped or to get  
14 it fixed and if it's not fixed in hours, then the  
15 school must go remote, period, end of story.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

17 MICHAEL MULGREW: There is no playing around  
18 here. What happened in March, we will never allow to  
19 happen again in our school system. Fighting with the  
20 Mayor in the streets for something that was so clear  
21 that had to be done, which was the closing of our  
22 schools and moving to remote took way too long.

23 So, now with this plan, the new state plan, we  
24 all now have the strongest and most aggressive  
25 policies and the greatest safe guards of any school

1  
2 system in the country. But it's only a plan on  
3 paper, it's not real in a school unless we all work  
4 together to make sure that it is real.

5 Remote learning, as Council Member Treyger has  
6 said and part of our great frustration with the city  
7 and with the Department of Education, for months  
8 we've been saying, more than 70 percent of all  
9 instruction in New York City next year will  
10 automatically be remote and we need to have a remote  
11 plan.

12 Today, I have a meeting with the Department of  
13 Education and it will not be a pretty meeting.  
14 Because all they have done to the schools is confuse  
15 them, send out dozens and dozens of documents  
16 contradicting each other, when this should be a very,  
17 and we've been very clear, each school has a  
18 functioning educational platform. You break down  
19 each class, you load it into the platform. Inside of  
20 the platform, you put the curriculum in the scope and  
21 sequence and all of the supportive materials and then  
22 you have different – the teachers who are working  
23 with these groups of students because we will truly  
24 be doing teen teaching in every school in New York  
25 City next year. Those teachers then all know exactly

1  
2 what page to be on when they are teaching the  
3 students.

4 This sounds simple but it's complicated. But the  
5 Department of Education has done nothing to try to  
6 clearly explain this to the schools. The safety  
7 stuff, it's a clear checklist, anyone can look at it.  
8 Either you have it or you don't. If you don't have  
9 it, nobody goes into the buildings. If the  
10 Department of Ed and City Hall says, oh no, it's  
11 there, so go into the building. We are ordering you,  
12 we will go directly to the building, at the same  
13 time, our lawyers will be going to a judge for a  
14 temporary restraining order.

15 This can be done because the agreement we reached  
16 in our plan absolutely was stamped by some of the top  
17 epidemiologists. Independent of everyone, not  
18 consulting for us, not working for the city,  
19 independent of everyone. Not Health and Hospitals,  
20 not people working in City Hall on the Mayor's Task  
21 Force for COVID. These were independent doctors  
22 which is why it took so long to get to this agreement  
23 because the city kept thinking they knew what was  
24 best. And the days of politicians trying to tell  
25



1  
2 people what is the correct medical decisions, really  
3 should end.

4       So, I look forward to working with all of you but  
5 I want to be clear, we have a lot to do and it's up  
6 to all of us to make sure that every single school,  
7 every school, has everything that they are suppose to  
8 have and when you need that information, it is on the  
9 state website, anyone can access it. So, this way,  
10 we all have access, it is transparent, it is clear.  
11 If the school doesn't have it, then it doesn't have  
12 it. You have to give them a couple hours to rectify  
13 it, if they don't rectify it, school goes remote,  
14 period.

15       That's how it has to work. No other way because  
16 the whole world is looking at us. Everyone and they  
17 all said over and over again, well, New York City's  
18 rate is so low, positivity rate is so low, they can  
19 open. You don't just open because your positivity  
20 rate is low. You only open if you are doing  
21 everything the experts are telling you has to be  
22 done.

23       So, that's what we have on paper, now our  
24 challenge is to make it real for each and every one  
25 of our schools, the communities, the parents, the

1  
2 students, and the teachers and the staff of every  
3 school.

4 So, I thank you all again for all of the work  
5 that we've done together but just because we have an  
6 agreement, the hard work really is now just  
7 beginning.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we will hear from Mark  
9 Cannizzaro.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

11 MARK CANNIZZARO: Good morning everyone and thank  
12 you for having this hearing and Chair Treyger  
13 especially for your staunch advocacy throughout this  
14 pandemic. You have been just a strong guiding voice  
15 for all of us and we certainly appreciate it and we  
16 recognize the role you played in assuring that we are  
17 able to get this delay in the opening until the 21<sup>st</sup>,  
18 which is so critical from the perspective of school  
19 leaders needing the time to work with their staff to  
20 implement protocols that are not usual protocols.  
21 Things that we haven't done in a number of years,  
22 things that we've never done actually and being able  
23 to coordinate all of the instructional plans that are  
24 going to need to get done between working with our  
25 remote teachers and our in-person teachers.

1 This is a tremendous undertaking and Michael  
2 Mulgrew just said the work has only begun and that  
3 was an understatement. We have so much to do between  
4 now and then and really what I'm here to do is just  
5 to thank everyone on this Zoom meeting, all the  
6 elected officials, Senator Jackson, and Borough  
7 President Brewer for your staunch advocacy as well as  
8 Councilman Kallos and all the folks that are here  
9 have been speaking up and speaking out and one of the  
10 things that is going to be a great challenge between  
11 now and then, you know, we've been talking about  
12 safety a lot and that's because safety is first and  
13 foremost and we need to keep everyone healthy. But  
14 there is another huge challenge ahead of us and  
15 that's staffing. And the fact that we're going to  
16 have these teachers working you know, remotely,  
17 separately from those working in the buildings is  
18 terrific but it presents a huge staffing challenge  
19 and principals right now are submitting numbers to  
20 the Department of Education of additional teachers  
21 they are going to need and it is really mind boggling  
22 the numbers that I'm seeing come across, so we're  
23 going to request and ask for your support.

24  
25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

1  
2 MARK CANNIZZARO: Not only for the safety aspects  
3 of this but making sure that we have appropriate  
4 staffing to make sure all of our children receive the  
5 education that they deserve.

6 Thank you all so much for having this and I look  
7 forward to our continued work together.

8 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, I want to thank  
9 President Cannizzaro and President Mulgrew. I want  
10 to take a moment to acknowledge something that really  
11 is worth acknowledging. Their courage and they are  
12 speaking up, not just for their members. You know,  
13 I've been in touch with members of CSA and UFT and  
14 DC37, 32BJ and all others throughout this challenging  
15 year. What I want folks to know is CSA, UFT, they  
16 are speaking up for much more than just their  
17 profession. They are speaking up for every single  
18 student and every single stakeholder because we are a  
19 school family.

20 You know, teachers and principals,  
21 administrators, they are part of a school community  
22 but it takes a family to do this work and the emails,  
23 the calls, the messages that I've received have  
24 always been very student centered about keeping my  
25 kids safe and supported.

1  
2 Principals, AAP's, teachers, have become you  
3 know, case workers, making sure that kids are getting  
4 food delivered. Taking money out of their own pocket  
5 to get kids hot food because some of the delivered  
6 food is always cold. The stories, I will never  
7 forget, the advocacy has been so powerful and it's  
8 never about them or about their job or their pro-  
9 it's about the kids and their wellbeing. And I  
10 shared earlier President Mulgrew and President  
11 Cannizzaro that as a teacher, there was a moment in  
12 each new school year in the beginning which can't be  
13 overlooked. That before I asked students to open up  
14 a notebook, I have to first establish trust in my  
15 classroom.

16 I have to first establish that safe and  
17 supportive learning environment for each child. Kids  
18 are very smart; they sense when somethings wrong.  
19 They are brilliant and that trust this year has been  
20 broken. Not by folks on this Zoom call but by  
21 leaders and that's a whole big thing that we just  
22 went through and so, there is work to do to repair  
23 that trust and to build that trust to instill a sense  
24 of confidence because that's required to make this  
25 work.

1  
2 And so, I just want to publicly thank both CSA,  
3 UFT for just the outpouring of advocacy and giving a  
4 voice to our kids this entire time. It's courageous,  
5 it's noted and you know, you helped us you know push  
6 the Administration, which was not moving at all and  
7 we know that we have much more work to do.

8 I just, want to just ask very quickly to each  
9 leader, where do you believe from your point of view?  
10 I have a point of view about from the city's Budget  
11 Negotiation Team about the state of city's finances.  
12 How dire is the city's need for additional money from  
13 Albany to truly operationalize plans to keep our  
14 school buildings not just whether it's open in some  
15 fashion but to remain operational and safe throughout  
16 the school year. How dire do you believe our need is  
17 from Albany for those resources right now? I'd like  
18 for each President to please say a few words.

19 MICHAEL MULGREW: Mark, you start.

20 MARK CANNIZZARO: It's dire. It is critical and  
21 I don't think we can function without some additional  
22 resources. So, it is that simple. We need to be  
23 able to borrow money and we need to be able to make  
24 sure that we get some money from the state that is  
25 supposed to be coming.

1  
2 MICHAEL MULGREW: Right now, we are requiring  
3 every school to have a 30 day COVID supply. It's not  
4 just PPE, it's cleaning materials, it's all sorts of  
5 different things. I don't know how long the city can  
6 continue to keep that supply chain moving, that  
7 currency of finances.

8 The Federal Government failed us all. They are a  
9 disgrace, they all stand up and give speeches about  
10 how important it is to open schools, knowing that  
11 these schools have all been decimated by financial  
12 hardship and they did nothing to help.

13 So, at this point, we're on our own in terms of  
14 our state but I believe that we will be able to get  
15 to a place where we have Albany understanding. This  
16 is a need of every community to stop worrying about  
17 politics but also at the same time have transparency  
18 and clarity from City Hall. We all understand there  
19 is not a lot of trust between this Administration and  
20 the people in Albany and I'm not talking about the  
21 government, I'm talking about other elected  
22 officials.

23 So, to us, it's like that's irrelevant. We have  
24 to take care of our children and our schools. So,  
25 knock it off. We will be in the room, everything is

1  
2 clear, transparent, on paper. This is what we're  
3 agreeing to and stop telling us how you feel about  
4 this one or that one. It's irrelevant and worse than  
5 that, it's a disgrace when you know we're talking  
6 about children coming to harm and that's why you need  
7 to get over this stuff.

8 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you both. I am in  
9 full agreement. We are in dire need and I just  
10 continue; I am very grateful for the courageous  
11 advocacy on behalf of the teachers, the  
12 administrators, and our entire school community  
13 members. I am very grateful to my education family.  
14 I am telling you that they are not speaking up just  
15 for their profession. This is not about  
16 professionals, this is about a family and if you mess  
17 with one member of the family, our kids, we're going  
18 to fight like hell for our kids and that's what this  
19 is all about.

20 So, I just want to thank both of you for your  
21 outstanding leadership and courage and we're going to  
22 continue to work together on behalf of our city.

23 Malcom, do any other of my colleagues have  
24 additional questions for the panel?



1  
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, first we will hear from  
3 Council Member Kallos.

4 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Okay.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: I want to start much like  
7 our Education Chair Mark Treyger by thanking both of  
8 you for using your organizations in the light of your  
9 members, our teachers, and principals to support our  
10 parents and students to close the schools in March,  
11 delay opening and your forceful advocacy around safe  
12 schools.

13 I have two questions, the first is for UFT  
14 President Michael Mulgrew. I believe testing will  
15 play a role in keeping our schools safe, can you  
16 share any agreements you may have one, on COVID-19  
17 testing for adults and students in every school  
18 building and a question for CSA President Cannizzaro,  
19 you've heard from Borough President Brewer and me  
20 that the city won't use our capital dollars to make  
21 ventilation safe or by laptops for students who need  
22 them. Are your principals getting additional funding  
23 for infrastructure improvements or the additional  
24 teachers you need?

1  
2 MICHAEL MULGREW: I guess I go first. You know,  
3 we had the head epidemiologist from Harvard Medical  
4 School as well as from the Northwell chain working  
5 with us on the testing protocols that we said we  
6 needed to have and the main piece, you could do a  
7 large poll test one time but as they were clear with  
8 that, that only lasts three days, three or four days.  
9 They even argue about three or four days. They  
10 should just decide and stop arguing about it but they  
11 said, if you are going to open up the school system,  
12 you are going to have to monitor, screen every school  
13 community. And just urging and telling people to go  
14 for tests is not going to do it because that's not  
15 what this is about.

16 People go for tests when they have symptoms. The  
17 thing to the school system is those who don't have  
18 symptoms and the way you deal with that very clearly  
19 they told me; they were very forceful on this is that  
20 you have a scientific random sampling of each  
21 community on a monthly basis. Unless the issue going  
22 on in the community, a zip code, is a growing number  
23 of positive cases, then they basically said you flood  
24 that zone, you flood your school and they said you  
25 can keep your school safe this way because what you

1  
2 will do is identify quickly if somebody has the virus  
3 before they start to demonstrate symptoms when they  
4 become much more contagious, you can isolate and all  
5 the other protocols automatically kick in. This was  
6 the biggest stumbling block we had with the City of  
7 New York in trying to get our schools open.

8       So, here you had top two experts have the same  
9 interests that we do. They absolutely agreed the  
10 schools should be open but you had to do it in a  
11 right way but at the same time, they have an interest  
12 in making sure that the virus does not spread and get  
13 inside of our city. They were like, you can open up  
14 without this but you'll get spikes inside of schools  
15 because you are not monitoring and you will close  
16 schools down left and right and you might think  
17 that's okay but then we're going to have to deal with  
18 the fact that you might have just started a surge in  
19 New York City.

20       That's why they said, you cannot open without a  
21 medical monitoring program and one that is designed  
22 by actual epidemiologist, not the Mayor. So, that is  
23 what we now have in place here in New York City and I  
24 want to be clear, it's a monitoring program. So, the  
25 test is not as invasive as having a COVID test. I've

1  
2 had all the different COVID tests because my wife and  
3 I take care of both of our mothers who are absolutely  
4 medically fragile. And when you're doing just  
5 monitoring, you can do what's known as a nasal swab  
6 that doesn't go all the way up into the nasal cavity,  
7 it just comes into the beginning of your nose. Those  
8 are - that's the medical monitoring program we will  
9 be using here in our New York City schools and is  
10 mandated for everyone.

11 You know, some people were like, well, you don't  
12 mandate the teachers just the children or mandate  
13 just the teachers not the children. I said, no,  
14 we're in this together. We're going into these  
15 schools together. We all got to be there. We got to  
16 show each other we're all in this together.

17 So, that's what we have and I thank you for that  
18 question and allow me to explain that.

19 MARK CANNIZZARO: Thank you Council Member Kallos  
20 as well. There is no direct funds coming to schools  
21 for the upgrading of the ventilation or the  
22 technology; however, we have been and of the staff,  
23 but we have been assured that those issues would be  
24 settled by the city and handled that way. So, I  
25 haven't seen exactly how it's going to happen yet,

1  
2 but we have been assured that it would be taken care  
3 of.

4 As far as the need for technology, the need is  
5 coming mainly for new students into the system.  
6 There certainly is that need, like Chair Treyger  
7 mentioned a while ago for you know, maintenance and  
8 repairs but a big need is coming for the new students  
9 into the system and that's where we're seeing some of  
10 the principals reaching out and looking for funds in  
11 order to purchase the technology.

12 So, we do have some issues there but the funds  
13 are not coming directly to principals there,  
14 apparently going through the City of New York.

15 MICHAEL MULGREW: And Mark, what do we do if a  
16 school doesn't get what it's supposed to get in terms  
17 of safety?

18 MARK CANNIZZARO: Well, there you go. If they  
19 don't have what they have in terms of safety, they  
20 are not going to be able to open.

21 MICHAEL MULGREW: We don't let them open, period.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Thank you.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, Council Member  
24 Rosenthal has questions.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Thank you. Trying to  
3 unmute there. Thank you very much. I really just  
4 wanted to take one minute because I know we have a  
5 lot of people lined up to speak and ask questions,  
6 just to thank both of you and the work you've done is  
7 extraordinary. But President Cannizzaro, I have to  
8 tell you your principals on the upper west side are  
9 truly rock stars.

10 We have an additional set of issues where parents  
11 are very concerned for a variety of reasons about  
12 their kids walking to school. So, in addition to  
13 getting their schools together, you know, making sure  
14 they have enough teachers for you know, on site  
15 learning and coordinating the teachers and the  
16 students and the different models that they want to  
17 have. And then, on top of that making sure their  
18 buildings are in good shape. It is extraordinary  
19 what we've asked these people to do. In my minds  
20 eye, it's on the level of what we've asked Kathryn  
21 Garcia to do as you know, Commissioner of Sanitation,  
22 the Food Czar, and the Lead Czar. That's what each  
23 of your principals are doing every single day. It is  
24 Yeoman's work. I don't understand how we can ask  
25 them to do it but even on top of that, how we can ask

1  
2 them to do that with so many unanswered questions.  
3 You know, as you just said, we're assuming every  
4 school will have a nurse. Well, is that every school  
5 or is that every building. We're assuming it is  
6 every school. But what these principals are really  
7 asking for is more social workers and Chair Treyger,  
8 that is something you have championed for a long time  
9 and you know, these kids have been through  
10 extraordinary trauma. There is no question, every  
11 school needs at least a couple of social workers as  
12 well as guidance counselors and you know, when we  
13 talk about borrowing for our schools, in addition to  
14 the fact that we can't absorb any cuts from the state  
15 government. When we talk about borrowing, I think we  
16 should be asking to borrow more money to make sure  
17 there are at least two social workers in every single  
18 school.

19 This is an extraordinary time. We have never  
20 seen a crisis like this. Our kids are going through  
21 a trauma that none of us have ever experienced and we  
22 have to make sure that they are as healthy as  
23 possible in every way, both physically and mentally.  
24 So, all of which to say, thank you.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

1  
2 MARK CANNIZZARO: Thank you.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we will hear from  
4 Council Member Lander.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you very much Chair  
7 for the hearing and to both of you, Michael and Mark  
8 and your members have been extraordinary in their  
9 commitment and their solidarity and their compassion  
10 and their organizing for themselves and each other  
11 and our families. And you know, this has been and is  
12 a really dark time but watching people organize  
13 together has really been powerful and I'm grateful  
14 for it and it's making a tremendous, tremendous  
15 difference. And of course, in addition to the  
16 teachers and principals, to the para's and cafeteria  
17 workers and everybody that's showing up in those  
18 schools, to long a list to name.

19 Though I do want to underline what Council Member  
20 Rosenthal said, because I think I know for myself, I  
21 praise teachers a lot and I don't know that I always  
22 praise principals. Some how you have like the  
23 principal in your head. It's like that you know,  
24 that big principal from when you were an elementary  
25 school student but I will just say that watching what



1 principals are doing right now, fighting for their  
2 teachers, fighting for their kids, and planning to  
3 make this work and I say this as a public school  
4 parent who is so grateful for our principal as well  
5 as the one's in my district. It's really  
6 extraordinary what they are doing.  
7

8 The question I want to ask and I apologize, I was  
9 having some technical difficulties, so I got kicked  
10 off during some of Chair Treyger's questions, is  
11 about the wrap around childcare plans. For those of  
12 our teachers and school staff and principals that  
13 have kids themselves, obviously it's essential to put  
14 safety first. So, organizing and letting us know  
15 what the agreement is on safety, the top, top, top.  
16 But there is also some just very practical things.  
17 Like, if you are a teacher who yourself has an  
18 elementary school kid who is only in school one or  
19 two or three days a week, who normally was in school  
20 five days a week, how could you go to work.

21 So, when the city originally announced their  
22 plan, they had no proposal for this. Thanks to our  
23 organizing together, the Mayor made an announcement  
24 that there would be 50,000 slots to be able to serve  
25 100,000 kids assuming they are in kind of half time

1  
2 education but now we have not heard anything yet. I  
3 mean, they put up a portal that people could apply  
4 and it did at least ask, are you a teacher? Are you  
5 an essential worker? Are you a low income family?  
6 But now, you know, we're still just a few days from  
7 the start of the school year and as far as I know we  
8 haven't yet heard anything.

9       No one has heard back, so have you guys heard  
10 anything for your members who have their own  
11 elementary age school kids? What are they doing?  
12 How are they going to be able to show up and teach if  
13 they don't have childcare and what are we going to do  
14 together to make sure that that program gets stood up  
15 in a way that is safe and that shows up on time for  
16 our teachers, our school staff, and our principals?  
17 And I'm committed to work together with you to make  
18 that happen. I know this is a question I want to be  
19 asking the Administration because they are the ones  
20 responsible for standing it up and certainly, I am  
21 asking them but I want to ask what you guys are you  
22 know, how you are seeing that and what we can do  
23 together.

24

25

1  
2           MICHAEL MULGREW: Haven't heard a word about it  
3 since their announcement. We keep asking and we get  
4 oh, yeah, we're coming out with it.

5           MARK CANNIZZARO: The only thing I can add to  
6 that is I do know they did reach out to schools, some  
7 schools to see if there were space available for some  
8 of these programs they are calling it the Bridge  
9 Academy but you know, they reach out to schools  
10 thinking they identified space but not understanding  
11 that most of the principals have used all of the  
12 space available for social distancing in this age of  
13 COVID. And so, where they think there is space,  
14 there isn't always. So, that's all I've heard  
15 though, so -

16           COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: And we've been talking to  
17 them a lot. I know they are reaching out to space  
18 providers and childcare providers but it's time to  
19 stand it up because I assume, I guess I'll just ask  
20 for this. I mean, you each have members who have  
21 young children who need childcare if they are going  
22 to come to work and take care of other people's  
23 children and right? I mean, that's not crazy is it?

24           MICHAEL MULGREW: Right, that's why we ran the  
25 campaign until he made his announcement and now we

1  
2 keep asking where is it and it will be the normal I  
3 guess, the last minute or late and that's going to be  
4 a problem.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Alright, well, I'm  
6 pledged to work closely with you guys to hammer and  
7 follow up. There are so many other things, so I  
8 guess we have to kind of like spread out as a team  
9 for which one we really push on and I care deeply  
10 about all the others that you are working on but I'll  
11 continue to work with you on this one, so we can get  
12 this stood up for all those families who need it.

13 So, thank you very much.

14 MARK CANNIZZARO: Thank you very much.

15 MICHAEL MULGREW: Thank you.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next we will hear from  
17 Council Member Levine.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Well, thank you so much  
20 Mr. Chair, Chair Treyger for fighting hard for the  
21 safety of our school system and a heartfelt thanks to  
22 both of our presidents, President Mulgrew and  
23 President Cannizzaro for standing up for students,  
24 for parents, families, and the women and men who are  
25 staffing our schools during this difficult time.

1  
2 In my role as Chair of the Health Committee, I  
3 have been proud to stand with you, to stand up for  
4 safety. And in that I want to ask about two things.

5 You were able to negotiate a citywide trigger  
6 that has the positivity rate in testing, exceeds 3  
7 percent then the whole system will revert to distance  
8 learning. As you know, we have real inequality in  
9 the way this pandemic is playing out and there are  
10 some communities especially, low income, Black and  
11 Brown neighborhoods where the positivity rate is  
12 already higher than the city average and we could  
13 easily see neighborhoods where locally the rates are  
14 above 3 percent.

15 I believe you've negotiated protocols for how the  
16 city should react in such cases. I wanted to ask you  
17 about that and then secondly, on testing, thank you  
18 for fighting so hard. You know that a test is only  
19 good if you get a quick result. We have tests today  
20 in the city that are delayed 7, 10, 14 days. That  
21 makes it pointless. Really a test needs to be 48  
22 hours or less. Could you talk about the guarantees  
23 that you've extracted on the quick turnaround for  
24 testing, so it's really useful to protect the safety  
25 of our students?

1  
2 MICHAEL MULGREW: Our agreement says 48 hour  
3 turnaround, so I just want to let you know that. Now  
4 the city is trying to figure out how to make that  
5 happen but you have to understand, I mean just think  
6 of it in scale, we have closed 1,500 school  
7 buildings, each one will have between 10 and 20  
8 percent of the entire population tested on a monthly  
9 basis and all of those tests have to have results  
10 back within 48 hours.

11 So, that's how - it's a challenge but I know that  
12 it can be done. When it comes to the neighborhoods,  
13 in terms of monitoring each zip code, we put in the  
14 provisions that we can really flood the school itself  
15 with all sorts of protective testing, monitoring in  
16 hope of being able to try to keep those schools open.  
17 I don't think that schools should be, you know, I am  
18 real hard, it is difficult when you are dealing with,  
19 you know that certain communities were hit harder  
20 than anyone else, so do they not deserve to have  
21 their school open?

22 You know, and it's a tough call. So, how do you  
23 balance that need of safety because they've been hit  
24 so hard, what the need of when you know that school  
25 is basically the foundational rock inside of the

1  
2 community. That's a tough decision that we're stuck  
3 with. So, what we've done is that we have a plan  
4 that we think will actually allow the school to be  
5 held safe, but once you get basically do you have  
6 positive tests in two different parts of the school,  
7 then the school is going to go to distance learning  
8 automatically. But we do believe that, you know, in  
9 terms of equity, there is one thing about this plan  
10 that we have. No one can deny that this is the most  
11 equitable plan ever because this is for every school.  
12 Every school has to be treated the same but we do  
13 know certain communities, we're going to have more  
14 challenges because of the - as we see the fluctuation  
15 and positivity rate.

16       What we saw earlier in the middle of last month  
17 in Sunset Park, actually, it was sad but it was good  
18 because we actually saw the flooding of the zone  
19 works. You get flooding and you test everybody and  
20 you quarantine them quickly and all of a sudden you  
21 can push your rates down. That's what the  
22 epidemiologists have been telling us throughout which  
23 is why we have this program.

24       But thank you for your question and support.

25       COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Thank you, thank you.

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COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next -

MARK CANNIZZARO: Oh, go ahead.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Oh sorry, go ahead.

MARK CANNIZZARO: No, no, that's all. I was just going to reiterate what Michael said. That's fine, move on.

MICHAEL MULGREW: The next one is yours Mark.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we will hear from Council Member Menchaca.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Thank you and I also want to say thank you to both of your hard work and not just your work in the union but all the members on the ground that are fighting really, really hard and I'm glad that you brought up Sunset Park and I think Sunset Park really taught us a lot. And I'm not sure that there are - I don't think we're at the level though at how we can respond quickly enough. I saw a lot of issues even with that rapid response, especially for immigrant communities and so, I want to ask a little bit more about if you could go deeper into that Sunset Park incident, which I think will happen and what happens to the entire neighborhood and a school is a school but a school is also



1  
2 embedded in a neighborhood with multiple children  
3 going to multiple schools. So, that's how we're  
4 thinking about it in Sunset Park as one larger  
5 community multigenerational folks living in one  
6 apartment.

7 And so, if you could talk a little bit more about  
8 Sunset Park and the learning from that, I'd like to  
9 hear that from both of you actually. See what you  
10 are all thinking on the principal side and teachers  
11 and then also, a question about isolation rooms and  
12 talk a little bit more about what that means if a  
13 child is and tests positive while at school, what  
14 happens and walk us through that process.

15 MARK CANNIZZARO: Go ahead Mike.

16 MICHAEL MULGREW: Sunset Park actually is just -  
17 everyone has to understand now that that is king in  
18 terms of COVID. We can always look at it, we know  
19 it's faulty at times alright, but when that was  
20 happening was when I was spending the most time with  
21 the epidemiologist we were working with and they  
22 said, if you actually flood that zone and you start  
23 testing and quarantine quickly, what you will do is  
24 you should be able to stop it from spreading, as long  
25 as you move rapidly.

1  
2 We know that some folks have issues with being  
3 tested at times but this is a virus and a virus is  
4 not political. Everybody is trying to make the virus  
5 political but the virus itself is not political. So,  
6 we have to treat it by using the data that the  
7 experts are telling us, we need to be looking at and  
8 then following the directions that we have to do.

9 So, that was the first time as far as I was  
10 concerned where the city actually responded  
11 appropriately because I was working with our own  
12 epidemiologist and they saw the testing numbers in  
13 the area that were having the mini-surge and they  
14 said that seems as if they are doing it correctly,  
15 now let see if it works.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

17 MICHAEL MULGREW: In terms of the isolation  
18 rooms, what happens is if anyone is showing some sort  
19 of symptoms in a school building, if they've already  
20 tested positive, they are not coming to the school  
21 building. They are going to be remote hopefully  
22 because hopefully they don't develop any of the  
23 severe affects of COVID and they just are  
24 asymptomatic for a period of time. But for those who  
25 are demonstrating symptoms inside of a school

1 building, they are then brought to the school nurse.

2 The school nurse determines whether they are COVID

3 like symptoms and at that point, the parent is

4 contacted or the adult has basically said, it's time

5 for you to go home and at the same time, we are

6 hoping that the nurses – we think we're going to have

7 this done in time. The nurses would also be able to

8 arrange for a rapid test for whoever is involved and

9 of course at that point it is the parent and the

10 adult, they can make their own decisions. But they

11 cannot come back to the school unless they've been

12 quarantined or have a negative test result.

13 MARK CANNIZZARO: So, I mean, same thing, look,

14 when it comes to the positive rates and the high

15 positivity rates, we need to leave the decisions to

16 the you know, the nonpartisan doctors that are

17 helping us out and put politics aside and listen to

18 the experts. You know, I know where my lane is and I

19 don't know what I don't know about epidemiology and

20 the virus and we have a lot of experts that are out

21 there helping us and advising us and advising the

22 City of New York and that's the key. Just making

23 sure that we listen the experts and when these rates

24 tick up, we flood the school, make sure that we don't

1  
2 have too many positive cases or any positive cases in  
3 the building. If and when we do, we go over the  
4 protocols that we have either quarantining classrooms  
5 or shutting schools down for a period of time and  
6 that's critical.

7 As far as the isolation rooms, yeah, like Michael  
8 said, if somebody is exhibiting symptoms and we're  
9 concerned that is a potential case, we isolate them  
10 until they are able to be tested by a professional  
11 and then there is a determination made whether or not  
12 that child needs to be kept out for a period of time.

13 So, again, you know, we're relying on people that  
14 have the expertise in this field.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Got it and I think the  
16 last thing I want to say is that up until you know,  
17 politics should be out of this but politics is  
18 driving a lot of the impacts on how people engage  
19 government, especially when government is saying get  
20 tested. Come to a government program in the park and  
21 get tested and in the Sunset Park situation, there  
22 was an ICE raid that happened right before the spike  
23 went up that caused a lot of folks to step back and  
24 not engage.

1  
2 And so, what I'm saying is that's only going to  
3 increase because of politics, because there is a big  
4 November election and that, I think is going to – and  
5 New York City is a focus right now by the President  
6 and I'm just thinking that can be I think and should  
7 be a factor in considering how we think about  
8 engaging parents, immigrant parents and I'd love to  
9 work with both of you after this hearing on how to  
10 make that happen.

11 MICHAEL MULGREW: Thank you.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Okay, thank you. Thank  
13 you Chair.

14 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you Council Member.  
15 I also want to recognize that we've been joined by  
16 Council Member Rose. Also, Council Member Menchaca  
17 it was noted that you were here for the record as  
18 well. Thank you for your questions and advocacy and  
19 from your district and our kids. But next, I think  
20 we have Council Member Rose who wants to ask a  
21 question.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member Rose, I tried  
24 to unmute you, you have a question?

25 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Okay, I'm unmuted now?

1  
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, go ahead Council  
3 Member.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you. My concern has  
5 been about the REC centers and what level Dropped  
6 audio 1:30:51-1:30:58] educational exchanges is  
7 taking place there. And the need for essential  
8 workers to continue to utilize these centers, what is  
9 the plan in terms of you know, these children that  
10 are going to be there? Are they going to be  
11 certified you know, and lessons with these young  
12 people and how are they going to do when there are  
13 people there of variant ages? I'm really concerned  
14 about this because the workers still have to go to  
15 work and I'm not clear how [DROPPED AUDIO 1:31:51]  
16 education centers.

17 MICHAEL MULGREW: I'm not sure if we heard the  
18 entire question but I think the concern is about the  
19 REC centers right now. You know, the Department of  
20 Education with us, we worked with those REC centers  
21 rather quickly in March. The city had no plan and  
22 actually, I don't say these things often but this  
23 phenomenal person at the DOE Ursulina Ramirez worked  
24 with myself and Mark and we got those centers up  
25 rather quickly, almost immediately. And then we were

1  
2 lucky enough because over 3,500 teachers and  
3 administrators volunteered to make sure that they were  
4 staffed and they've been open throughout, since  
5 March.

6 The thing is now, now because the school system  
7 needs to open and function, it's no longer going to  
8 be the Department of Education. So, this is where  
9 the question before came up about the childcare  
10 program that the Mayor announced. We don't have the  
11 answers for that. We're all slightly frustrated.  
12 We're not getting answers. What we hear is yeah,  
13 yeah, I know, I guess your question - the answer is  
14 not yeah, it's like what are the details? When are  
15 you standing the program up? What is going to go on  
16 inside of it because our members children are going  
17 to be in their also.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Right, so, in the attempt  
19 to - [DROPPED AUDIO 1:33:24-1:33:30] teachers. Is  
20 there going to you know-

21 MICHAEL MULGREW: I got to be honest with you.  
22 Right now, every teacher in New York City who works  
23 for the Department of Education is needed to teach.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.  
25

1  
2           MICHAEL MULGREW: Right now. We are, actually  
3 the Department of Ed is in the process of redeploying  
4 any centrals administrative staff with a teaching  
5 certificate. We are so short teachers. So, in terms  
6 of the childcare programs, they may or may not have  
7 someone with a teaching certificate but if they work  
8 with the Department of Education, they are going to  
9 be utilized for the Department of Education because  
10 we are so short staffed.

11           COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you. I'm just really  
12 concerned about these childcare centers and the REC  
13 centers and if there is going to be any level of  
14 education, you know, being done there. Is there  
15 going to be you know, any pedagogy going on?

16           MICHAEL MULGREW: They may or may not. I know  
17 that we've had conversations with utilizing some of  
18 our daycare providers. All of them have been trained  
19 in early childhood development but I know that won't  
20 be enough for 100,000 children but I know all of the  
21 UFT early childcare providers actually have been  
22 certified early child development specialists.

23           MARK CANNIZZARO: Yeah, and some of the CBO's  
24 have been contacted also. They had folks that have  
25 some experience to do this, but again, like Michael



1  
2 said and Chair Treyger alluded to very early in this  
3 hearing, that the mantra of guidance is forthcoming  
4 is another – this is another example of it and we're  
5 just waiting for this guidance that we so desperately  
6 need.

7       MICHAEL MULGREW: And Chair Treyger, we don't  
8 want to rude but Mark and myself do have to get to a  
9 meeting.

10       COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member Grodenchik did  
11 have his hand up, if he can quickly ask his question  
12 of you both.

13       MICHAEL MULGREW: That's fine.

14       CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Very quickly, yes.

15       SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

16       COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: As the husband of an  
17 educator, I know time is at a premium. I just have a  
18 question for you. I was hoping perhaps one of my  
19 colleagues would ask it but I am very concerned as  
20 someone who counts well as a graduate of New York  
21 City public schools. When they did the survey about  
22 education, whether you were going to be in school or  
23 remote only, the numbers to me, I means, I wish I had  
24 an election where the default was if you don't vote,  
25 your vote counts for Grodenchik. I know that it

1  
2 doesn't work like that and I wondered if either of  
3 you gentlemen would like to comment on that.

4 I wanted to make that statement to put it on the  
5 record because it to me is practically an obscenity  
6 that we would count votes that weren't voted. We  
7 seem to be having that problem in many areas of this  
8 country. But I wondered if either of you gentleman  
9 would like to talk about this or would like to  
10 politely decline. I will take either Mr. Chairman.  
11 I just wanted to put that on the record.

12 MICHAEL MULGREW: You could start Mark.

13 MARK CANNIZZARO: Sure, no, I'm happy to comment  
14 on that and I agree from the perspective, I'm not  
15 even looking at this from a political perspective of  
16 what we put out there but principals need to know how  
17 many students are coming to school, in which grades,  
18 so that they can program classes. And right now,  
19 what we know is that a very large percentage of those  
20 families who responded to the survey have opted for  
21 all remote learning and making the assumption that  
22 all the others are coming to school, we know is a  
23 faulty assumption.

24 So, we're trying our best to have an idea of what  
25 it is going to look like and a lot of schools are

1  
2 actually reaching out and calling parents  
3 individually to try to find out what those numbers  
4 are going to look like.

5 So, yes, it would have been a service to us had  
6 we known, had everyone been asked to respond but you  
7 know, this is where we're at right now and it is  
8 causing us some programming headaches.

9 MICHAEL MULGREW: So, we needed to do the survey.  
10 Let's be clear. That was part of programming issues  
11 but then for the Mayor to claim that anyone who  
12 didn't fill out the survey was standing by him and  
13 his plan would just be classic New York City  
14 chutzpah, is a nice way to say it.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: That's a nice way to  
16 put it. My wife is teaching upstairs as we speak  
17 right now, her students at Community College. I'm  
18 going to leave it there. I want to thank both of you  
19 for your incredible work on behalf of not only the  
20 children of the City of New York but really everybody  
21 because as Chair Treyger knows, I feel as many of us  
22 do that our schools are the bedrock of our community.

23 So, thank you both and continued.

24 MICHAEL MULGREW: Thank you.

25 MARK CANNIZZARO: Thank you very much.

1  
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member Barron had a  
3 very short but urgent question before you go.

4 MICHAEL MULGREW: Well, since she is one of us,  
5 she can ask, of course.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you so much. You  
8 know, we hear the phrase, we're all in this together,  
9 which you would think implies equity but we know that  
10 we may all be in this storm together but some people  
11 are in ocean liners or yachts or row boats and some  
12 people just have life jackets.

13 So, or some people have morning pods and some  
14 people have summer homes that they can go to. So,  
15 there is existing in equity and this coronavirus has  
16 exposed. It put a spot light on the racism that  
17 exists in these institutions across the country.

18 Coming out of this, what are we going to have in  
19 place that will address those materials that we have  
20 purchased in the past in the form of textbooks that  
21 don't acknowledge, reflect what our contributions  
22 have been as a people and additionally, what kind of  
23 pedagogical approaches are going to now correct what  
24 has existed for so many years and also, what are we  
25 going to do to recapture a loss of constructional

1  
2 time that children have been subjected to for these  
3 last six months and moving forward? How are we going  
4 to recapture that time?

5 MARK CANNIZZARO: Well, we have – first of all  
6 that was perhaps a short but not easy question to  
7 answer, that's for sure. But a very important one in  
8 deed.

9 The Department of Education has assembled a group  
10 from the CSA, the UFT and the Department of Education  
11 to rethink our curriculum and actually we were in the  
12 midst of really getting through that when the  
13 pandemic struck and they are still working but they  
14 were side tracked a little bit but those – you know,  
15 it was focused on a culturally responsive education  
16 as well as the New York State standards.

17 So, there is a lot of progress in that area,  
18 although we're certainly not there yet and we should  
19 be there. There is no doubt about that.

20 As far as the lost instructional time, that's  
21 going to be one of the biggest challenges that we are  
22 faced with, especially as we're going into this  
23 remote and hybrid environment where we're still not  
24 going to have the children in front of us on an every  
25 day regular basis. So, our teachers, our school

1  
2 leaders and all of the folks are extremely dedicated.  
3 They are going to be looking at the students and  
4 doing the absolute best they can but there are facts  
5 here. The facts are the gaps have grown wider, the  
6 inequities have grown wider and we're really going to  
7 need to redouble our efforts to try to bring some  
8 semblance to this.

9       MICHAEL MULGREW: Yeah, I'm going to echo what  
10 Mark said. The shame was our project, our curriculum  
11 project was really moving forward when this pandemic  
12 hit and we were really getting to a place where there  
13 would be a choice for every school community but  
14 everything was going to have cultural responsiveness  
15 inside of it. And you know, the pandemic, we can't  
16 paint this like we're going to be able to make it all  
17 better. We're not, there has been some damage that's  
18 done that will not be undone. We just have to face  
19 that.

20       And we're also now facing this cohort or, you  
21 know, I can speak it to you that way. This cohort of  
22 children as soon as we get through this virus will be  
23 looking at a very, very difficult recession which  
24 makes this even more complicated and then, when we  
25 have a recession it really becomes even worse, as we

1  
2 all know for the children who really have faced the  
3 greatest challenges and that's something we're going  
4 to have to all work on to make sure that we don't  
5 allow that to happen in our city.

6       Everyone talks about equity but we really never  
7 have it do we. We don't. That is why like on this  
8 safety plan, I get to say we have equity. It's every  
9 school period, end of story, it doesn't matter. No,  
10 you don't get to have the mask and you don't get to  
11 not have them and they get to have them, we're not  
12 doing that anymore. I think we need to take the same  
13 approach when we get out of this when it comes to  
14 educational support because it's going to be rough.  
15 You know, and if things work out, everything for the  
16 best, we're looking at three really bad years.

17       I was in a meeting yesterday and I said to  
18 someone, I said, your Administration is not going to  
19 be here in a year and a half. All you keep talking  
20 about is next year. All the economic forecasters are  
21 telling us next year is going to be bad, the  
22 following year is even going to go worse.

23       So, you know, this virus has done a lot of damage  
24 but we still got a long way to go because this  
25 recession is directly as a result of this virus, so

1  
2 we got a long way to go through this but I hear you  
3 clearly and we will continue this fight. We will get  
4 the curriculum project done but then it is really  
5 about fighting to make sure each school is being  
6 supported exactly the same or at sometimes being  
7 supported even more because of the challenges that  
8 that school faces.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Exactly, exactly. So,  
10 equal is – the equity is not always the equal. Thank  
11 you.

12 MICHAEL MULGREW: Correct.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And that concludes questions  
14 for this panel.

15 MARK CANNIZZARO: Thank you everyone.

16 MICHAEL MULGREW: Thank you everyone. Thank you  
17 Chair Treyger.

18 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you, thank you for  
19 your courage. I appreciate you.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now call up the next  
21 panel. Irwin Redlener, Jessica Yager, Adam Grumbach,  
22 and Dr. Ramon Tallaj. We will first hear from Irwin  
23 Redlener.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.  
25



1  
2 IRWIN REDLENER: Am I unmuted? Hi everybody,  
3 thanks for inviting me to this and I'll keep my  
4 remarks brief. I first of all want to just thank the  
5 City Council and I also want to make note of Council  
6 Member Menchaca, his points about the politics of all  
7 this and everybody's points about the disparities.  
8 And also, Michael Mulgrew and the UFT have been  
9 spectacular in dealing with this and working with the  
10 city and trying to get something done that is fair  
11 and appropriate.

12 I am a pediatrician; I direct the National Center  
13 for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University and  
14 the pandemic program there.

15 So, two quick points. The politics is real and  
16 it started at the top with the most incompetent  
17 management of a crisis in American history that  
18 Donald Trump has engaged in since this whole thing  
19 began and it is incompetent to seek down and cause  
20 tremendous damage in America that every city, every  
21 rural area, and so on. And the other thing I want to  
22 say is that I know we're doing a lot of hand reading  
23 here about disparities and they are real but they  
24 existed well before this pandemic happened. The  
25 poverty, the adversities, the struggles, the kids

1  
2 that were failing in schools and so on. These are  
3 intrinsic institutional problems that we are going to  
4 have to take on. In some ways, the pandemic has shed  
5 light on some long, long problems and hopefully we  
6 will be able to tackle them but as Michael Mulgrew  
7 just said, it's going to take a very, very long time  
8 to fix this.

9       So, I just want to make a couple of quick points  
10 here. I'm glad that the reopening has been  
11 postponed. I've been deeply concerned about this and  
12 by the way, when we've been living in a bubble in New  
13 York and everywhere for six months, children have  
14 been basically isolated at home with their nuclear  
15 families and that's it. Now, we're putting  
16 nationally 55 million children back into schools and  
17 one way or another and we don't know what's going to  
18 happen. Like, we did know what was going to happen  
19 at the University and college campus level, we're  
20 doing even a bigger, broader experiment with our K-12  
21 students.

22       SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

23       IRWIN REDLENER: Anyway, I just want to say the  
24 testing issue, we're about to, we are on the verge of  
25 having a point of care testing, which will change

1  
2 everything. We need to be testing way more  
3 frequently than monthly. We are not there yet. We  
4 need to really focus on the remote learning, the  
5 disparities there are unconscionable and the final  
6 point I want to make is, where are the billionaires  
7 and high network individuals in New York, who any one  
8 of them could have provided the resources to make  
9 sure every single child in New York City had the  
10 internet access, the equipment and the mentoring to  
11 make sure that we are able to actually to perform in  
12 a remote learning environment. Where are those  
13 billionaires? Has anyone asked them to help save the  
14 children of New York City?

15 I will leave it at that. Thanks.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we will hear from  
17 Jessica Yager.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

19 JESSICA YAGER: Good afternoon Chair Treyger and  
20 members of the Education Committee. My name is  
21 Jessica Yager and I am the Vice President of Policy  
22 and Planning at WIN.

23 As New York City's largest provider of shelter  
24 and services for homeless families with children, we  
25 are gravely concerned that homeless students are

1  
2 being left behind by the city's response to the  
3 COVID-19 crisis.

4 WIN supports the City Council's Resolution 1410  
5 and urges the city to prioritize the health of our  
6 students and school staff at the same time as  
7 ensuring that all children, especially our most  
8 vulnerable children, have the resources they need to  
9 learn. We are heartened by the recent agreement  
10 between the Mayor and the UFT delaying the school  
11 opening date and urge the city to only reopen schools  
12 once the experts determine it is safe. In addition,  
13 DOE must immediately address the lack of preparedness  
14 and resources for homeless families.

15 To date, remote learning has failed children and  
16 shelter. These students continue to endure late and  
17 inconsistent access to technology and other critical  
18 academic supports. For homeless students to succeed,  
19 the DOE must ensure that they can access technology  
20 and the services they need, such as individualized  
21 instruction and tutors, paraprofessionals bridging  
22 the gap social workers and a live IT help desk, even  
23 during remote learning.

24 We are also extremely disturbed by DOE's  
25 inadequate communication with parents in shelters.

1  
2 There is no known plan to provide transportation for  
3 homeless students. A number of students in our  
4 shelters have not received notifications of which  
5 schools they are registered to attend.

6 The closure of school buildings has severed  
7 important communication and administrative channels,  
8 including the mere disappearance of family liaisons  
9 in shelters and the closing of district offices. And  
10 these have not been reestablished in preparation for  
11 the new school year. To open schools without these  
12 critical supports for the city's neediest children in  
13 place would be unconscionable.

14 Thank you very much for your consideration of  
15 this important topic and all that you do for New York  
16 City's homeless families and children.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and next, we will  
18 hear from Adam Grumbach.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

20 ADAM GRUMBACH: Thank you Mr. Chair and Council  
21 Members. My name is Adam Grumbach, I am recent  
22 retired principal from a consortium high school in  
23 New York City. I actually retired on Monday, which  
24 means I can spend some time with you today.

1  
2 I've been working closely with principals these  
3 last six months to plan for this coming year and the  
4 failures of the Department of Education have been  
5 placed on high relief during this time.

6 The essential problem is that the central  
7 department pays zero attention to the voices coming  
8 out of the schools. The balance between  
9 accountability and support, which are the two  
10 functions of the central department, are completely  
11 out of whack. It's all accountability all the time  
12 now and the Department is not very good at support  
13 and these failures have become very clear. Rather  
14 than asking school leaders and school communities  
15 what they need to engage students and make this year  
16 productive, the Department has ignored our requests  
17 until the eleventh hour, instead issuing directives  
18 and protocols that throw everything into chaos.

19 Specifically, my frustrations this year, we have  
20 been requesting along with parents outdoor space.  
21 Everybody knows that anything you can do outdoors is  
22 much safer than what you can do indoors. Until  
23 August 28<sup>th</sup>, the Mayor ignored these requests. Made  
24 it impossible to get outdoor space reserved for  
25 schools. So far, the only outdoor spaces that have

1  
2 been approved have been already in the controls of  
3 schools like the school yard. No adjacent streets or  
4 anything like that. We don't have tents; we don't  
5 have tables. The Fire Department and the Police  
6 Department have tents and tables that could be given  
7 to schools. That hasn't happened.

8       The central bureaucracy could be efficient at  
9 providing these things, but it just doesn't do it.  
10 We've been asking for ventilation and to have our  
11 ventilation checked for two months now. That started  
12 this past weekend. They are discovering to their  
13 chagrin that a lot of schools don't have working HVAC  
14 systems or have windows that open.

15       We've been asking for a nurse to be provided for  
16 every school. That was I guess promised by the Mayor  
17 on August 14<sup>th</sup>. It hasn't happened yet. I'm glad to  
18 hear Mr. Mulgrew say that it is going to happen and  
19 that there is going to be rapid testing available but  
20 the Department has provided a protocol for what to do  
21 for confirmed cases. What do we do between the time  
22 when someone has a suspected case and we get  
23 confirmation? What do we do for the classroom of  
24 students who have been sitting in the room with a  
25 sick student or staff member?

1  
2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

3 ADAM GRUMBACH: These are the issues that need to  
4 be addressed and we need help quickly. Thank you for  
5 your time.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and the final  
7 panelist will be Dr. Ramon Tallaj please.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

9 DR. RAMON TALLAJ: Good morning. I would like to  
10 state my speech in the state of denial. That I  
11 believe the school reopening is important. This  
12 March, my colleague, in their free will, knowing the  
13 risk have free tested hundreds of thousands of  
14 families, fed hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers on  
15 our expenses. We didn't wait, we did it because it  
16 was the right thing to do and we continue to see our  
17 patients and our children in the neighborhoods where  
18 they live. Not in hospitals, not with ventilators but  
19 with family medicine in the value based care. We  
20 ourselves have lost a lot of colleagues to  
21 coronavirus, particularly pediatricians. We know  
22 what it means to be in the field with the kids.

23 So, I'm hear today to tell you about our  
24 experience, offer our help, share our perspective,  
25 throughout the voice of healthcare for the school and



1  
2 community of color that their parent chooses us to  
3 take care of them with preventive medicine and high  
4 quality. There is no question that you need to  
5 postpone the opening of the school and I will tell  
6 you why. Nothing has changed since March. The same  
7 killing virus, no vaccine, no treatment. We know  
8 that in our neighborhood, 40 percent of the kids are  
9 igg positive. We have tested 120,000 tests we have  
10 done in childrens, more than 400,000 in general. 60  
11 percent haven't seen the virus. At any point, and  
12 that's like 2 percent. That means for every 100  
13 kids, 2 will have the virus and then we were mixed  
14 with like 60 who I have been seeing and they will  
15 come back on. The majority without symptoms and Deja  
16 vu. It would come again. Those with the  
17 grandparents and parents, somebody is going to die.  
18 Those apartments are the nursing home equivalent in  
19 our neighborhood but 90 percent of our family tests  
20 say they don't want to bring their kids. I don't  
21 know what they are talking about it. 90 percent say  
22 they are going to bring their kids back to school.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

24 DR. RAMON TALLAJ: Now, we believe that a minimum  
25 offer testing for every student teacher and the

1  
2 school employee should be done and we keep our  
3 offices and any school if asked to do the test for  
4 them.

5 Now, second thing, by bringing the school nurses,  
6 independent nurses suggested by the Teacher  
7 Association, we would like to have computers. We  
8 will need 500 computers to connect with us with all  
9 HIPAA compliance to be sure that everything, not only  
10 the vaccine, not only the testing, everything is in  
11 good communication, we start doing family medicine.

12 Finally, I will tell you this, we take care of  
13 200,000 kids, 20 percent of the kids in New York City  
14 and in our group. We already know that 42 percent of  
15 our kids are already positive or 40 percent. Those  
16 kids are free to start, yes, we don't know how long  
17 this is going to last but we know that  
18 it is still there. We've been testing them. We  
19 know; therefore, those kids should start school.  
20 Somebody mentioned somebody in some place, we haven't  
21 seen that and the immunity is still there. Now, we  
22 only have to deal with 60 percent. That's my belief.

23 The state of denial is this. The virus is still  
24 there. In August, 3.5 percent in our neighborhood is  
25 still positive, not 2, not 1, not .9, 3.5.

1  
2 Therefore, there is no guarantee, it doesn't matter  
3 how you open, it's a virus.

4 The virus will not stop because you have  
5 politics, you have papers, no papers. It will move  
6 from one place to the other in human beings,  
7 especially now, after this vacation in these days.

8 Please, we've been there since the beginning, pay  
9 attention to what we're saying and we are here to  
10 help. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you very much for  
12 your powerful testimony and sharing your very serious  
13 and powerful concerns. Thank you Ramon.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We do have a hand raised by  
15 Council Member Levin.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you very much Chair  
18 and I want to thank this panel. I want to ask Dr.  
19 Redlener, if he is still on the call. So, Dr.  
20 Redlener, you had expressed concerns a couple of  
21 weeks ago that there might still be or that there  
22 would be an outbreak associated with schools in New  
23 York City this fall. Is there anything in this plan  
24 that you see would change that potential?  
25

1  
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Dr. Redlener, one moment, we  
3 just need to unmute you.

4 IRWIN REDLENER: Hi, thanks for that question. I  
5 am glad that the schools are reopening and to your  
6 question, but I am absolutely convinced that we're  
7 going to have to close the schools again and what Dr.  
8 Tallaj was just talking about is real. We have three  
9 potential hot beds of resurgence. Now, one of the  
10 universities and colleges that have already reopened  
11 and have already seen tremendous outbreaks, we have  
12 the Labor Day weekend coming up with all sorts of  
13 activities we won't be able to control and finally,  
14 we have this massive return of many, many students  
15 and teachers and staff to the school system and yeah,  
16 we're trying to be ready but I absolutely still stick  
17 with my point. I'm glad we're trying to do this but  
18 I am very, pretty certain that we are going to see a  
19 resurgence. It's just, there is too many factors  
20 here that we can't control and like Dr. Tallaj said,  
21 it's just, it's a virus and it's going to spread and  
22 the schools are not as ready as they could or should  
23 be unfortunately.

24

25

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Even starting with where  
3 we are now in terms of our case levels being so low  
4 here in New York City?

5 IRWIN REDLENER: Yeah, and I was never a big  
6 believer in the infection rates as the criteria  
7 because that can change in a heartbeat. It could  
8 change in a week after we get started here. These  
9 children, it's not just a question of the children  
10 getting infected, we're going to have asymptomatic  
11 children with the virus going home to  
12 multigenerational families. The people are  
13 tremendously high risk and they are going to become  
14 spreaders and that's, I mean, I don't know how we are  
15 going to avoid that. I mean, I hope we do but I  
16 just, I don't know how that's going to happen.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Right, okay, are there  
18 physical changes to the layouts of the buildings,  
19 improvements that you could see being done to  
20 ventilation and configuration of the schools, the  
21 outdoor space. Do those move the needle or are they  
22 kind of you know, around the edges?

23 IRWIN REDLENER: No, they move the needle and  
24 they are all good and we need the separation. We  
25 need the masks; we need the teachers and staff being

1  
2 ready and prepared. We need to utilize outdoor  
3 spaces and the ventilation system is a big problem.  
4 I'm counting on what Michael Mulgrew was saying and  
5 what the city and the Mayor's Office has been saying  
6 that all the rooms will be inspected and I hope that  
7 they will inspect them and fix the one's that are not  
8 ready.

9 But they can't let children or teachers back into  
10 the classroom that does not have adequate  
11 ventilation. That's another formula for disaster  
12 that could be avoiding them. There are so many  
13 spaces available in the city, we turn the Javits  
14 Center into a massive hospital center a few months  
15 ago. Why don't we turn that into classroom space.  
16 Why don't we use more outdoor space. There is a lot  
17 of things that we could have done, including as I  
18 said before, asking our cooperate leaders and I'm  
19 very, you know, massive amount of high network  
20 individuals in New York find us the space, find us  
21 the extra support that we need. Find us the people  
22 that will help us deal with children who need the  
23 support and try to do remote learning. The city is  
24 not prepared for these things and there is more that  
25 we can do and we're going to hope for the best here

1  
2 but I'm not betting the ranch that this is going to  
3 work for all that long and Dr. Tallaj wants to weigh  
4 in as well.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, but so far, my  
6 takeaway is that Dr. Redlener thinks that we're  
7 probably going to have to close the school season.

8 RAMON TALLAJ: That's what I'm concluding but  
9 here is the — the force is that forces, are that  
10 children need to get back into the educational  
11 mainstream. These children who are behind the eight  
12 ball last February, are now in a far worse situation.  
13 They have got to get educated. This is their lives  
14 and their futures at stake here but they have to do  
15 it safely, so they don't become vectors for a  
16 resurgence of COVID in the community.

17 You know, this is the reality.

18 RAMON TALLAJ: One of the things important that  
19 you know, if we keep using the mask and everybody  
20 using the mask, the flu will be less this year.

21 IRWIN REDLENER: Yes.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Yeah.

23 RAMON TALLAJ: And if we keep using that, that  
24 will help a lot.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Yeah, and Dr. Tallaj, do  
3 you also think that if and when we reopen that we're  
4 going to - that we're going to start to see  
5 resurgence?

6 RAMON TALLAJ: There is no question about that.  
7 It happened with people in college which are 18 and  
8 above, imagine with kids. Changing masks, one to the  
9 other, you can't control that.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: I know. I see little kids  
11 and they are impossible.

12 RAMON TALLAJ: 99.9 percent of them would not  
13 suffer. It's the elderly back home. The family work  
14 and Why you don't do it? Because then they are not  
15 prepared to leave having at home the teacher  
16 teaching. Because the two of them have to work for  
17 the family to pay the rent. But here is the point,  
18 we are in a state of denial. We are in a global  
19 pandemic to the virus. Things are not the same. For  
20 you to try to make it the same as before, that's  
21 where we are wrong. It can't be.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: So, you think that we will  
23 also probably have to close again?  
24  
25



1  
2 RAMON TALLAJ: All I want to say is déjà vu. I  
3 don't want my grandparents in those buildings to die.  
4 We saw so many die and again - Now, inside, nothing  
5 happened by chance in March. It will come back, we  
6 will be together, the children. They come back home  
7 to our buildings; we have problem with elderly people  
8 who survive so far. Remember 60 percent of the kids  
9 still -

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Oh, I know, yeah and  
11 that's high. That's a high rate.

12 RAMON TALLAJ: Speaker, in other places it's  
13 bigger.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, thank you very much.  
15 Thank you very much Dr.'s, I appreciate that. Thank  
16 you.

17 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I just want to ask a follow  
18 up question to the doctors, Dr. Redlener and Dr.  
19 Tallaj. One of my concerns with the hybrid model,  
20 and this was based on a report that I read from a  
21 Harvard infectious disease expert that argued that  
22 the hybrid model actually increases exposure that  
23 students and adults would have. Meaning that on  
24 Monday, you would be with one group of kids in a  
25 school building but then on Tuesday, when you are not

1  
2 in a school building and if your parents could afford  
3 a childcare setting, then you are in a different  
4 group of kids with different adults.

5 And he argues that that actually is not wise in a  
6 pandemic. That you should limit the amount of folks  
7 that you are exposed to as Dr. Redlener mentioned  
8 before that folks have been in a bubble for the last  
9 couple of months and now we're reintroducing kids  
10 back into you know, society again.

11 So, can anyone speak to the concern of the hybrid  
12 model increasing exposure to our children?

13 IRWIN REDLENER: Yeah, so, this is really the  
14 point of what I'm trying to say also is that we had  
15 them isolated and now they are not isolated. They  
16 are back in the community. Whether it is one day a  
17 week or five days a week, they are going to be  
18 exposed to each other. They are going to get  
19 infected. They may or may not be all that  
20 symptomatic and by the way, there is all new data  
21 about the number of children in the U.S. that are  
22 getting COVID and being hospitalized and not  
23 surviving.

24 It's slow and still a small percentage but it  
25 happens and this is where we are. In a very

1  
2 different kind of situation where the kids are now  
3 going to be exposed and they in turn are going to be  
4 exposing and like Dr. Tallaj also said, they are  
5 going to be exposing either other children in other  
6 settings or certainly their families and their family  
7 members and especially for people – they are going to  
8 go home. You know, we used to say to the children  
9 weeks ago, you cannot visit grandma and grandpa  
10 because you might get them sick and they are going to  
11 be at high risk.

12       But now, we have to say the same message to the  
13 parents. So, the 35 and 45 year old parents of these  
14 children who may have obesity, who may have diabetes  
15 or may have other risk factors, they are now going to  
16 be exposed to their own children who are carriers.  
17 And this is why I am saying it is inevitable and I do  
18 agree with the analysis that says you know; we are  
19 entering a whole new uncertain territory here. Where  
20 they don't know what's going to happen but we are  
21 clearly going to see children as vectors for  
22 potential resurgence here. And it doesn't really  
23 matter what the pattern is, of the hybrid pattern.  
24 If we're going to put kids in congregate settings, we  
25 are going to have problems. If we do them all in

1  
2 remote, we will have other kinds of problems, like a  
3 vast percentage of the 1.1 million students in the  
4 New York City public school system will not be able  
5 to do remote learning. They will get even farther  
6 and farther behind, which it is a disaster for them  
7 and their families and our country, frankly. We just  
8 cannot have this.

9       You know, it's hard to know what to do. If it  
10 were up to me, I'd be pouring a fortune of money into  
11 allowing children to be able to learn remote and you  
12 know, with tutors, with coming from the private  
13 sector, make sure there is no child without internet  
14 access. The hardware they need and the mentor that  
15 they need.

16       I mean, this is about everything and we're trying  
17 to balance the health issues. With the need to get  
18 back into the learning trajectory and you know, you  
19 guys and Chair, you are in this very important  
20 position now. Better you than me in a way, because I  
21 am completely torn about this. I know what we're  
22 facing, I understand the danger that we could be  
23 experiencing in not too many weeks from now but I am  
24 sick about the fact that kids are falling behind the  
25 eight ball and their parents need to work. It's not

1  
2 just the essential workers, every parent that's you  
3 know, struggling to get by needs their job.

4       What are they telling their employer? I can work  
5 Monday this week and Thursday and Friday next week.

6 I mean, what kind of reality is that for them.

7 Anyway, you guys are doing a phenomenal job and I  
8 really appreciate your sticking to this but it is  
9 very, very challenging. I have never seen anything

10 like this and I've been practicing pediatrics and  
11 forth under certain populations since 1971. We have  
12 never had anything like this in the U.S. and  
13 globally.

14       RAMON TALLAJ: Let me add to this. It is very  
15 important that you understand. A lot lost their job.  
16 They have no way to buy their medications and  
17 in trouble and there are no way to pay rent.

18       Now, did you hear what I say about 42 percent.  
19 42 percent, we don't know how long it lasts, but  
20 those kids already have the disease. They saw the  
21 virus, they created immunity, not 100 percent  
22 secure. You have a lot of people talking what it  
23 means, but I mean, but we know that. We know the  
24 same thing, to check for immunity, checking for the  
25 igg. That's sincere that you want to have people

1  
2 - You check on that. Those kids as I said before,  
3 in March, we had so many people, 70 percent positive  
4 and asking for rooms for hotels. Schools, beds, to  
5 isolate them from the building never happened, now we  
6 have a chance to understand that you put these kids  
7 together, they were already infected themselves  
8 because they already had the disease. They are less  
9 likely to have the problem. They have to use  
10 capacity and they take care of 60 percent at home.  
11 That could be a start, that's my personal opinion.  
12 We don't share the opinion because of the immunity.  
13 But right now, you keep more alive in having the 42  
14 percent going back to school, being in the room  
15 together. They still will have the virus and pass it  
16 to somebody else but they don't have the disease,  
17 they already passed it. They won't bring it home  
18 unless the situation didn't happen yet. But it is  
19 less likely, it's less likely. The other 60 percent,  
20 let's take a look at who they are, how they live,  
21 what do they need? The social have to be addressed  
22 in that direction. That's my point of view.

23 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I appreciate those very  
24 informed opinions and thoughts and one final thing  
25 here is there was recent reports early this summer

1  
2 and I'm not sure if it still stands because of the  
3 science on this continues to evolve. That children  
4 under the age of ten apparently transmit less virus  
5 than kids over the age of ten. That they can still  
6 transmit the virus but it's not the same virus load  
7 as kids over the age of ten and that type of research  
8 informs some decisions by European countries to  
9 prioritize in-person services for younger grades as  
10 opposed to older grades, you know later grades.

11       Could anyone speak to the latest science on that  
12 that they are aware of and about the concept of  
13 prioritizing in-person for early grades because of  
14 the science on that. I would appreciate, thank you.

15       IRWIN REDLENER: So, let me just make a quick  
16 comment about that. That is true. So, older kids,  
17 you know teenagers and so on, actually can get  
18 infected and transmit it the same as adults  
19 basically. Under the age of 10 to 12 and in the  
20 younger grades, children can still have a very, very  
21 high viral load in their nose. They could be  
22 carriers, they could be spreaders, probably not to the  
23 same extent as older children but all of this chair  
24 is relative, it's all relative. You know, it's like  
25 yes, they may be less likely but when you are talking

1  
2 about, I don't know how many of the 1.1 million are  
3 in the earlier grades, whatever it is, there is going  
4 to be a lot of children who are going to be carrying  
5 it and could become spreaders.

6 So, theoretically, yes, they are less likely than  
7 older children but it's not zero. So, we're still  
8 dealing with some level of risk, which is very  
9 difficult to assess and a lot of those studies by the  
10 way by the prevalence of the virus and spreading,  
11 those studies need to be replicated in other places.  
12 These were done in Europe but there is a lot more to  
13 be said and thought about - I'm sorry, in South Korea  
14 but there is a lot more to be said and done about  
15 this but it doesn't get us off the hook with the  
16 younger children.

17 RAMON TALLAJ: [INAUDIBLE 2:13:18] where they say  
18 that. We have more than 25,000 of those ages that's  
19 done and probably 7 to 80,000 different ages and we  
20 asked something different. You know why so many  
21 patients dies at the beginning? It's where it starts  
22 first, in the hospital. We are going to have to get  
23 a vaccine, the pediatricians, if we don't, start  
24 dying start getting very sick. A lot of them very  
25 sick, some of them die. I work with patients in that



1  
2 group, we have to – and many reopen because we knew  
3 people were getting behind. We didn't want an  
4 epidemic within an epidemic. Mumps, measles start  
5 showing up because we don't vaccinate the kids.

6 I mean, it's difficult to understand where they  
7 get this number from because what we seen and  
8 my grandkids who transmit to my daughter and she got  
9 very sick. You know, what is important is, you are  
10 going to have it, they are going to have it and there  
11 is a way, they sneeze, they cough. Certainly, the  
12 other one moves more around, more outside, touch  
13 other people, you can control this better in the  
14 house in quarantine. The other one tend to do more  
15 free, can pass the virus to everybody.

16 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you. Thank you very,  
17 very much for that informed point and the last thing  
18 I will say Dr. Redlener and Dr. Tallaj, I want to  
19 also give voice to a number of educators who they  
20 fight like hell for their kids, for their student but  
21 they are also human beings. They have families at  
22 home. Some of them are primary care takers for their  
23 families. There are a number of folks in the  
24 education system that are in a position where they  
25 themselves for example might not be in a high risk

1  
2 group but they are the primary care taker for mom or  
3 dad or for a relative who is in a high risk group.  
4 And they are petrified of doing anything that would  
5 jeopardize the health of their loved one and they are  
6 being denied medical accommodations by the  
7 Administration. Can you speak to the level of risk  
8 to folks who work in a school, who you know, even if  
9 they are in a high risk groups, obviously they should  
10 be immediately granted medical accommodations because  
11 no one should be put in that type of you know,  
12 compromise situation but what if they are a caretaker  
13 for mom or dad or for a relative who is in a high  
14 risk group. Can you speak to the need to also  
15 consider those accommodations which they need?

16 I appreciate the doctors input on that.

17 RAMON TALLAJ: Chair, this is very important.  
18 It's going to have the same risk that everybody in  
19 the population has. This is a virus. We have to  
20 protect them. We are [INAUDIBLE 2:16:27] -inaudible  
21 2:17:41]

22 IRWIN REDLENER: So, let me clear about this  
23 Chair. So, absolutely without exemption, every  
24 teacher that is personally at risk or is taking care  
25 of some people that are at risk should be given

1  
2 appropriate and immediate accommodation, so they  
3 don't have to make a choice like that. There is just  
4 no question about it. This is what we have to do and  
5 I just want to reiterate something that I really  
6 think in four to six weeks, we will have available  
7 these point of care tests that do not need to go to  
8 the lab. It's a little bit of saliva or a little  
9 anterior nasal swab on a piece of paper like a  
10 pregnancy test or a blood sugar test that we will be  
11 able to get the results in 15 or 30 minutes and  
12 that's going to be a game changer and when that  
13 happens, you know, we need to kind of respond to that  
14 with appropriate new policies.

15 In the meantime, if a teacher declares, I am at  
16 risk, I am very worried or I am carrying for somebody  
17 who is at risk, immediately, there has to be a  
18 protocol in place to allow them to be accommodated.  
19 So, they continue to get paid, they can work  
20 remotely, whatever they need to do but we cannot have  
21 policies that put anyone at danger. I'm talking  
22 about obviously the children, the teachers, the  
23 staff, the bus drivers, the entire system is made up  
24 of individuals working hard and they have to be

1  
2 protected. That's the least that we could do for  
3 them.

4 RAMON TALLAJ: One more thing with the Chair  
5 before I finish. You know Chair, I came to this  
6 country looking for the American dream. We are the  
7 land of the free. This is the land of the people.  
8 You represent the people like the House of Represent  
9 for the state, you represent the people. The  
10 grassroots is where the people should come from to  
11 make solutions. Yes, the whole world is looking at  
12 us. We have to come with solution that protect our  
13 people. We are in not in great world times. We will  
14 never leave. Nobody on this panel has lived to die  
15 of pandemic. This is the first spell that we have  
16 had. we have no idea when it start. You know it's  
17 crazy for me to say this, we were more prepared to  
18 defend this country with arsenal and nuclear weapons.  
19 To defend the life of the American citizen with PPE's  
20 to save our lives.

21 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you both. Thank you  
22 both for your very powerful and informative testimony  
23 and also just for clarity purposes, the unions are  
24 still battling the administration on this issue of  
25 accommodations for staff. This is still an

1  
2 unresolved matter and that's why I wanted the  
3 Administration to be here today but we're going to  
4 press them still on this issue. Because as mentioned  
5 Dr. Redlener and Dr. Tallaj, no one should be put in  
6 this type of high risk situation that puts their  
7 families at risk.

8       So, I appreciate your testimony and your powerful  
9 leadership and speaking truth to power as well.  
10 Thank you very much.

11       RAMON TALLAJ: Chair, before you go, I have to  
12 say one more thing. Those nurses should be  
13 independent. Be careful. That's why the resignation  
14 of the Secretary of State, I'm not looking, they  
15 don't belong to the hospital only and then they take  
16 it away. It's should be nurses independent. We are  
17 offering the computers for them to connect to any  
18 doctors, and let the family choose to be their  
19 primary care and we will work to make sure that we  
20 are helping in any direction. And we've been doing  
21 this for free so far during the pandemic.

22       CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you very much. Thank  
23 you.

24       COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And that concludes this  
25 panel. We have two going to move up Sophie Xu and

1  
2 William Diep. Following them will be a panel of  
3 parents, Liz Rosenberg, Camala Carmon, Taj Sutton and  
4 Meghan Sciannameo-Aidala.

5 So, we will first hear from Sophie.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

7 SOPHIE XU: Thank you all for having me here  
8 today. My name is Sophie Xu and I am a Rising High  
9 School Senior. I would like to deeply thank the  
10 Chair of Council Member Treyger as well as the  
11 members of the Committee on Education for holding  
12 this hearing.

13 A hearing that should not have to exist but is  
14 necessary because of shameful circumstances.  
15 Reopening would directly impact all of us.  
16 Educators, school administrators, adult ally's,  
17 citywide youth activists and parents. As a student  
18 and person of color, and Asian Pacific American, my  
19 and others like me lived experiences are valid too  
20 and inseparable from this topic. Yet many people in  
21 power have tossed our perspectives to the sidelines  
22 and irresponsibly made no attempt to truly heed or  
23 include our community centered organizations and  
24 unions conditions for reopening.

1  
2 As a viral syndrome of capitalism, they have  
3 chosen to prioritize their positions, reputation, and  
4 capital of any form over the lives of our young  
5 people and teachers and likely by extension, their  
6 households.

7 In this undemocratic status quo that pushes folks  
8 to choose between their fundamental rights of  
9 education and health, I am a comparatively privileged  
10 outlier that can choose both.

11 I can only imagine how little access to most  
12 marginalized people across the lines have ability,  
13 immigration status and more than they have to  
14 shifting policy.

15 For every single excuse to reopen, such as the  
16 need to combat food insecurity throughout schools,  
17 there are healing based alternatives that do not risk  
18 exposure to the virus. I will name a few. One,  
19 reach out to underheard communities in their desired  
20 languages to identify educational barriers they have  
21 been facing since COVID started.

22 Two, remove blended learning as an option.  
23 Instead, make remote learning more equitable. Three,  
24 expand resources such as regional enrichment centers.  
25 And last but not least, reopen schools only when they

1  
2 have fully met all safety and health guidelines  
3 regardless of when the time comes.

4 We students will stand in solidarity with  
5 teachers against the outspoken. We are unafraid to  
6 strike. We cannot afford to wait on this delay and  
7 we cannot afford to cost our lives for politics.  
8 Thank you.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we will hear from  
10 William.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

12 WILLIAM DIEP: Thank you so much. Dear City  
13 Council, my name is William Diep and I'm a Rising  
14 High School Senior at the Brooklyn Modern School. I  
15 am also the Founder of Virus Racism and a member of  
16 Teens Take Charge.

17 So, as a student of color in our nations largest  
18 school system, I am frustrated that Mayor de Blasio  
19 has chosen to delay the in-person reopening of our  
20 schools only until September 21<sup>st</sup>. My school does  
21 not have the answers or resources to quickly respond  
22 to the questions that we have. How will  
23 extracurriculars work? What will the grading policy  
24 look like? My school shares a building with two  
25 other schools, what about that? Will there still be



1  
2 student metro cards? How will we guarantee a nurse  
3 in every single school in our public school system?

4       These questions dictate my education and if we  
5 don't have the answers to these questions, then why  
6 are reopening schools. I'm not risking my own life  
7 to go to school and neither should anyone else in our  
8 school system. My school is not ready to reopen. We  
9 do not have the proper ventilation system; our school  
10 population is increasing every year and we are not  
11 prepared for this upcoming school year and I think  
12 that every other school is not ready to do so either.

13       This is coming from a student who did in fact  
14 struggle with online learning and was able to be  
15 privileged to have the choice between remote learning  
16 and a hybrid learning system. But I know that it is  
17 smarter and safer to stick with a fully remote  
18 learning system or until this virus is gone and has  
19 been minimalized.

20       If we are not reopening indoor dining at  
21 restaurants, then why are we returning back to in-  
22 person schools with a blended learning system? Once  
23 schools reopen, the DOE will experience a second  
24 wave, like how other school systems have. Look at  
25 the examples that we have seen in different parts of

1 the country. Mayor de Blasio, if you are hearing  
2 this, listen to the voices of the students and  
3 teachers. You only had one student in your reopening  
4 task force and you had members from upstate New York  
5 from other parts of the state controlling -

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

7 WILLIAM DIEP: The New York City school system.

8 And if you are not going to listen to this  
9 testimony and you are not going to listen to this  
10 theory, then shame on you for not hearing the voices  
11 of those who are oppressed and those who are  
12 discriminated against. Who you obviously don't care  
13 about from your previous actions.

14 City Council, I urge every member here to stand  
15 for the voices of all students, families and teachers  
16 and advocate for the delay of the in-person return to  
17 schools until January or until we are safe to go  
18 back.

19 I will end my testimony with this question.  
20 Mayor de Blasio, why is it your choice to take away  
21 our right to live? Thank you.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: There are no Council Member  
23 questions. Chair?  
24

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you for the students  
3 who continue to speak so powerfully. Truth to power  
4 and I really appreciate their courage and the civic  
5 activism. There is no textbook that could match the  
6 power of what students are speaking here today. So,  
7 I truly appreciate them. Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Actually, when I said that,  
9 two people raised their hand. Council Member Levin?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you. Thank you  
11 Chair. I just want to thank this panel as well and I  
12 just want to pose one question, something that I've  
13 been wrestling with when thinking about this topic  
14 now for the last several months.

15 Because I agree with you and listening to the  
16 panel before you, the two doctors expressing concerns  
17 that they think that there could be you know, another  
18 outbreak in New York City related to schools  
19 reopening and that's you know, in their - you know  
20 with all the experience that they have is leading  
21 them to that conclusion.

22 On the other hand, or the other side of this  
23 conversation is for families who have to go to work.  
24 So, parents that can't work remotely whether they are  
25 essential workers or they are working in some place

1  
2 where they have to actually be there. How are you as  
3 students looking at or thinking about that question  
4 of what do we do for, if we were to do all remote  
5 learning, what would we do for our families where a  
6 parent has to go to work and the child is too young  
7 to stay home alone?

8 WILLIAM DIEP: I can start this. So, I first  
9 want to say that our current remote learning system,  
10 although it's ideal over a blended learning system,  
11 it still needs to be reformed because the students  
12 who have been oppressed and discriminated for so long  
13 continue to be oppressed and discriminated against  
14 because of this virus.

15 So, because of that, we need to provide resources  
16 and services virtually and in a safe and socially  
17 distant way for students and families who are  
18 undergoing this discrimination and this oppression,  
19 who do find remote learning and the remote learning  
20 system difficult to captivate and for those parents  
21 that do have to learn, we need to be able to provide  
22 services. We need to be able to provide resources  
23 both virtually and in a system where everyone can  
24 stay safe because every student deserves to live but  
25 every student deserves an education.

1  
2 SOPHIE XU: Yes, and adding on to William, I  
3 think it's very important for parents to be able to  
4 go to regional enrichment centers, meaning we must  
5 expand REC's throughout the city, especially since  
6 feasibly, I think a lot of the times, young people  
7 who do go by remote learning they might lack, like I  
8 mentioned in my testimony, they might lack food  
9 security. And so, that's one on the instances in  
10 which a working parent, regardless of whether they  
11 are an essential worker or not, they would likely  
12 struggle to provide for their child.

13 So, I think it is very important that we do  
14 establish those equitable centers throughout the city  
15 just to make sure that, like you said, those parents  
16 that aren't able to economically stay full time at  
17 home even for example or even have care keepers for  
18 their kids, they will have an extra option for  
19 daycare centers throughout the city to provide for  
20 them. And I think that would be my main sample  
21 solution and I still think like William said, remote  
22 learning has a whole host of problems on its own that  
23 my myself grapple with on a day to day basis.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

25 SOPHIE XU: Be reformed.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: You can go ahead and  
3 finish out. I'm done, I can't ask any more questions  
4 but you can finish what you were saying.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: One second Sophie, we will  
6 get you unmuted.

7 SOPHIE XU: So, thank you and I was almost done  
8 anyways but I do think it is very important for  
9 parents to receive the opportunities to have citywide  
10 welfare centers. Essentially not any places that  
11 promote segregation, rather places that will give  
12 them the resources they need. Because again, when we  
13 propose these solutions, we believe it is in the  
14 hands of the city to provide for us at the end of the  
15 day.

16 It's incumbent on them to provide for us. It's  
17 not incumbent on those families that are struggling.  
18 And also, this is why we must get rid of blended  
19 learning. We must go fully remote and provide for  
20 those kids in an equitable way. Nothing is lost by  
21 going fully remote. If you are worried about  
22 parents, then there must be ways for the city to  
23 provide because the city has a very high budget and  
24 they definitely can do that if they redistribute it.

1  
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member Menchaca has  
3 questions.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Thank you William and  
6 Sophie. I am again moved by the young voices in this  
7 topic, in this very important moment as we think  
8 about education and I just couldn't help but feel  
9 such clear voice about what needs to happen and  
10 pointing to the concept that the city has resources.  
11 The budget is contracting but we still have resources  
12 that we can allocate for the most vulnerable and I  
13 think you really presented some very, very clear  
14 policy recommendations that I think we're all trying  
15 to hold but it just kind of distills it and I just  
16 want to say thank you for distilling it and maybe my,  
17 because my question was going to be about the  
18 regional centers and how you really thought the  
19 enrichments centers and how you thought about them.  
20 Maybe my question to both of you are really about how  
21 your organizing as young people with other students.  
22 I know in Sunset Park, there is a mix of students  
23 that want to go back to school and we're trying to  
24 figure out what's driving that question. Is that  
25 something that is plain out within your kind of

1  
2 organizing right now or are all the students that you  
3 are organizing with pretty clear about the  
4 recommendations you just gave us. Is that  
5 representative of what's happening or is there really  
6 a debate?

7 SOPHIE XU: So, if I could go first, then I would  
8 say that I would definitely not want to speak on  
9 behalf of all the fellow organizers and powerful  
10 youth citywide activists that I've been working with  
11 including William.

12 So, I do think that even though I have taken the  
13 time to educate myself and inform myself on why it's  
14 important to stay remote, I know a ton of people,  
15 including my parents. I've had to speak with them  
16 and inform them and tell them why they have been fed  
17 misinformation about why they should stay blended.

18 So, I know in the past, people weren't able to  
19 understand that going blended and staying in this  
20 blended environment is very unsanitary and that's the  
21 main point. Because you are just going to do  
22 everything you would remotely but you are going to  
23 put your health at risk and you are going to make  
24 yourself susceptible to this highly infectious virus.



1  
2       So, that's why I know a lot of other youth  
3 activists. Generally, I do think there is a greater  
4 consensus that they do support remote learning, but I  
5 would not want to speak for all of them and I know  
6 that the ones that do support blended learning likely  
7 haven't taken or gotten the opportunities to learn  
8 more about the harms of blended learning and why  
9 blended learning really is not the way to go.  
10 Especially since it jeopardizes everyone and it just  
11 does not work out. And like William said earlier, we  
12 both have had negative experiences with remote  
13 learning but there is no reason to choose our  
14 education over our lives in that sense. We should  
15 not have to. Be able to go to school and get that  
16 privilege while putting our lives at stake.

17       COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: And in the last eight  
18 seconds, I want to ask, give us two or three ideas of  
19 what equitable remote learning looks like.

20       SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

21       WILLIAM DIEP: I think one example of equitable  
22 learning is that we make sure that we look at  
23 different students capacity. So, I know the city has  
24 stated that we are mandating by attending Zoom  
25 classes or why are we mandating Zoom classes when

1  
2 students are at homes. They are dealing with  
3 financial situations, economic situations with our  
4 households, so why are we mandating something. When  
5 we are at home, we have to deal with our family  
6 circumstances, we have to deal with schools. So, we  
7 need to make sure that we have an equitable system  
8 where we look at each student individually. We make  
9 sure that every student can do the best that they can  
10 academically but we also look at every students  
11 mental health. We look at every students capacity  
12 and see the situations that they come from. And at  
13 the end of the day, young people are so powerful.  
14 Young people, we are the one's who are in the school  
15 system and because we are the ones who are making the  
16 school system, we are the ones learning it. And so,  
17 the Mayor and the Chancellor and everyone who works  
18 in the DOE, we experience a direct effect, so we  
19 should be the ones who are in lead of our education  
20 and because of that, we should be able to have  
21 leadership and we should be able to have that  
22 capacity for flexibility.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Thank you both of you  
24 and I hope to follow up with you. I'll find a way to  
25 get a hold of you but if you follow me on social

1  
2 media, send me a message, I would love to keep  
3 organizing with you.

4 Thank you both.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And we're now done with this  
6 panel. There are no further Council Member  
7 questions. We will move on to the next panel. The  
8 next panel will be Meghan Sciannomeo-Aidala, Liz  
9 Rosenberg, Kemala Karmen, Liat Olenick and Tajh  
10 Sutton. We will start with Meghan.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

12 MEGHAN SCIANNAMEO-AIDALA: Hi, my name is Meghan  
13 Sciannameo and I am a teacher at PS1 in Sunset Park  
14 Brooklyn in District 15. And thank you for the  
15 platform to speak today at the people's hearing. I  
16 am also a proud member of Press NYC and the MORE  
17 caucus and a parent of a UPK student.

18 This is my 15<sup>th</sup> year at PS1 and it is the only  
19 school that I have ever taught in. I desperately  
20 miss my students, their families, and my colleagues  
21 and I know that remote learning can never take the  
22 place of in-person education and connection but the  
23 Mayor and the DOE's plan, as well as the new deal  
24 struck by the Mayor and Michael Mulgrew is not safe  
25 and it is not equitable.

1  
2       There are simply too many deal breakers. I want  
3 to thank Council Member Menchaca for pushing them on  
4 this and for advocating for our Sunset Park  
5 community. This deal still allows teachers and staff  
6 members to walk into unsafe school buildings on mass  
7 on Tuesday. What magical work was done in this deal  
8 to make this neglected and underfunded school system  
9 safe and equitable? Did I miss the press release  
10 about improved ventilation for all school buildings?  
11 Buildings that have been defunded year after year  
12 including this one with the city budget passed in  
13 July or is the six inches of windows in my school  
14 building open up to let in the air from the congested  
15 BQE enough? Did I miss the announcement that the  
16 Mayor and the DOE and the union had struck a deal  
17 with the private internet and cellphone companies to  
18 provide increased bandwidth and laptops for families.

19       I must have been sleeping when an improved plan  
20 for testing and tracing, not the random and the  
21 hazard current plan was announced. I must have  
22 missed when the Mayor and the Chancellor and Michael  
23 Mulgrew decided to prioritize our students who were  
24 most in need and when a real concrete plan for  
25 students with IEP's and English language learners

1  
2 were put forth. Before I close, I want to read from  
3 a letter that I helped draft with PS1 equity team. A  
4 letter that was translated into three languages.  
5 Something the DOE and the Mayor have not done with  
6 their survey's and their outreach.

7 When New York City and the DOE and union leaders  
8 disregard the diverse needs of communities like  
9 Sunset Park and others around the city, students,  
10 families, and staff will continue to bear the brunt  
11 of the inconceivable consequences first, which will  
12 then cause a chain reaction that negatively affects  
13 the entire city.

14 Thank you.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next we will hear from Liz  
16 Rosenberg.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

18 LIZ ROSENBERG: Thank you for creating this space  
19 for parents to share our thoughts about reopening. I  
20 hope you will schedule an oversight hearing for next  
21 week, so the DOE will respond to everything that is  
22 said here today. The narrative is that parents can  
23 make a choice, remote or blended, blended, or remote.  
24 Six days a month or six hours with masks on all day  
25 in rooms who air safety has not been certified by a

1  
2 ventilation expert. If there is a case, then all  
3 bets are off, especially if that case is our kid.  
4 Remember remote or blended, blended, or remote,  
5 what's best for your family? That would be the  
6 question if we didn't have nine day testing lags or a  
7 failed tracing program. What's best for your family  
8 would make sense if there weren't so many school  
9 employees telling us that they are going in against  
10 their will.

11 People we love and admire who don't get to  
12 protect their high risk loved ones which is not a  
13 criteria to work from home. Okay, honestly, what's  
14 best for your family has never been the right  
15 question and that's one reason we have so much  
16 inequity in the system.

17 This is about safety. This is about listening to  
18 the wisdom of school communities. This is about  
19 doing absolutely everything we can to refuse to  
20 accept a Mayor's plan that resembles no model tried  
21 in any other country. With the UFT's deal, it would  
22 seem like there is no stopping this train but you all  
23 were elected to protect the people of this city and  
24 this is the moment we need you to do it. Go visit  
25 schools, ask them if they have surveyed staff, many

1  
2 have. In my two kids schools, the staff that  
3 participated in the survey shared that they do not  
4 feel safe returning to buildings. 90 percent in my  
5 sons elementary school and 87 percent of participants  
6 at my daughters giant high school.

7 No pledge or press conference can erase these  
8 truths that exist in all of our schools. Blended or  
9 remote, it's really unsafe or safe. More lives lost  
10 or fewer. Magical thinking or the facts. It's not  
11 open schools or have no childcare. It is don't rely  
12 on schools to do childcare, expand REC's, and support  
13 students in the most local most responsive, equitable  
14 and safe way as possible.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we will hear from  
16 Kemala.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, we will come right back  
19 to her. Next, we will hear from Liat Olenick.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

21 LIAT OLENICK: Hi everybody. My name is Liat  
22 Olenick. I am an Elementary School Teacher, Chapter  
23 Leader and MORE Member. I am in support of the  
24 Resolution to delay in-person school reopening. I  
25 will also be teaching remote. At home, I have a

1  
2 medical accommodation but I'm here and I'm continuing  
3 to advocate because I'm concerned for my entire  
4 school community.

5       Although the Mayor has made it seem that teachers  
6 who are opposing his inoperable reopening plan are  
7 doing so out of selfishness and a lack of interest in  
8 working. That is absolutely not true, we are  
9 concerned for people's lives and I'm especially  
10 concerned about what the Mayor and the Chancellor  
11 refuse to talk about or address in their plans which  
12 is what happens when a school community member dies.

13       I also wanted to note that although there is a  
14 delay to students starting school, staff are supposed  
15 to be in the buildings this Tuesday. Even buildings  
16 that we know are not safe and have remaining  
17 ventilation issues. And many of these staff members  
18 will also be required to go into school buildings,  
19 even if they are teaching remotely which makes no  
20 sense.

21       I wanted to respond to I know Council Member  
22 Treyger talked about trust. Trust is incredibly  
23 important. He is right, that trust has been broken.  
24 Trust has also been broken with our union leadership.  
25 With Michael Mulgrew who was on this call earlier,



1  
2 who cut a back room deal earlier this week with the  
3 Mayor without any input from rank and file numbers.  
4 And then has not once surveyed UFT members on their  
5 position on going back to school or their concerns  
6 about returning to our school buildings.

7 And finally, I wanted to respond to what the  
8 pediatrician mentioned earlier in this hearing about  
9 schools definitely closing again. I am extremely  
10 concerned about this instability and the effects on  
11 children.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

13 LIAT OLENICK: Can I finish my sentence?

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Go ahead.

15 LIAT OLENICK: Thank you. We all know children  
16 need predictability. They need routine, they need  
17 stability. I'm on my school safety team. This plan  
18 is going to fall apart and I'm particularly concerned  
19 about neighborhoods with high infection rates and how  
20 quickly those schools will shut back down again. We  
21 need an approach that provides something stable for  
22 kids and families for at least a few months. That  
23 means starting fully remote, investing in quality  
24 remote learning. It means expanding REC centers and  
25 using limited outdoor learning where possible to

1  
2 support students with the highest needs but we need  
3 something that will last more than a week or two  
4 because this will just retraumatize our children and  
5 staff.

6 Thank you.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we will hear for  
8 Kemala.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

10 KEMALA KARMEN: We want our kids in school in-  
11 person, but we are smart enough to realize that the  
12 virus doesn't really care what we want. We can't  
13 just wish students in their seats without taking the  
14 infection control steps that science and common sense  
15 dictate. I will focus on just one of those, COVID  
16 testing.

17 In addition to my Rising 11<sup>th</sup> grader who I won't  
18 let step foot into her crumbling HVAC less 100 plus  
19 year old building, I have an older child who is  
20 returning to college. Why the difference? Because  
21 we believe her college is acting in good faith to  
22 address just the sort of demands being brought up  
23 here today including a serious test and trace  
24 regimen.

1  
2 All students and staff returning to my child's  
3 campus must have onboarding tests. Additionally, all  
4 students and staff are scheduled by an app for  
5 mandatory testing one to three times a week. The  
6 school maintains a dashboard updated daily. We can  
7 see how many tests have been administered. The  
8 number of positives, the number of people in  
9 isolation or quarantine etc.

10 When I looked at the dashboard last Thursday when  
11 students were starting to trickle back for Monday's  
12 first day of classes, there were zero positives and  
13 no one in isolation. When I look at it as I prepare  
14 this testimony, that number has climbed to 7 out of  
15 nearly 7,000 tests. And those 7 individuals who  
16 would have otherwise been circulating among the  
17 campus population, potentially infectors of infection  
18 were drawn off immediately into isolation.

19 So, take a moment and extrapolate. Of course, it  
20 is more expensive and involved in every way to do  
21 this for a million plus students and staff but the  
22 virus doesn't really care how much it costs, nor how  
23 difficult it is to organize. It's simply what must  
24 be done to keep infection at bay.

1  
2 And in our exponentially greater pool of students  
3 and staff, we would have far more than 7 positives  
4 that wouldn't be caught and those positive  
5 individuals are more likely to live in  
6 multigenerational households with the frail etc.

7 It's a ticking time bomb. We can't responsibly  
8 return in full force to buildings until we address  
9 this. The first step raise the money for  
10 comprehensive COVID testing by taxing the rich.

11 Thank you.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will  
13 hear from Tajh Sutton.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

15 TAJH SUTTON: Hi and thank you. I think the  
16 first thing I need to do, we're patting, there is a  
17 lot of patting each other on the back happening on  
18 this call.

19 So, I want to acknowledge the MORE caucus of the  
20 United Federation of Teachers who was calling for a  
21 delay months and months and months before the UFT  
22 finally came out with a much less comprehensive plan.

23 I want to acknowledge the principals on the  
24 ground in various districts throughout New York City  
25 who gave the CSA the power with their voices to come

1  
2 out against an unsafe reopening and I want to  
3 acknowledge the parents, students, and teachers on  
4 the ground who have been saying what our leaders have  
5 just finally found the courage to say.

6 We have been fighting to remove police from our  
7 schools and to fund them even before the pandemic.  
8 And someone on the call said, you know, all this  
9 handling about these inequities but they existed  
10 before. Yes, they did and we were fighting for them  
11 before the pandemic, which is why it's really  
12 frustrating for us to be operating within this silver  
13 lining framework where we acknowledge and focus on  
14 the good and ignore the problems.

15 It's also inappropriate that our leaders would  
16 gaslight parents, teachers, school staff, and  
17 community members asking valid questions that they  
18 don't have answers for.

19 All those are red flags and the deal breakers  
20 brought forth by the public advocate, by Council  
21 Member Mark Treyger, by PRESS NYC which is a group of  
22 parents from over 20 New York City school districts  
23 who are saying we don't have what we need and we  
24 can't open with, in some where only some schools are  
25 going to function well.

1  
2 In my district, there are schools raising money  
3 for PPE and there are also schools who cannot do  
4 that. So, to address the inequity, not have a plan  
5 for it and try to open the schools anyway, is  
6 outrageous. We need to delay, further delay  
7 reopening. We need a phased reopening and we need to  
8 ensure that our most vulnerable students are  
9 prioritized for in-person learning first.

10 Fully opening schools at the same time will  
11 result in more sickness and death and that it is not  
12 something no one in our city deserves. Thank you.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you to this panel. We  
15 will now move on to the next. The next panel we will  
16 have Lisa Pines, Sheree Gibson, Judith Kanaba[SP?]  
17 and Melissa Alvarez. We will start with Lisa.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

19 LISA PINES: Hi, I'm Lisa Pines. I teach art in  
20 District 75 and our district serves 25,000 children  
21 with significant disabilities. Over 80 percent of  
22 which are kids of color.

23 The Mayor and the Chancellor say we must return  
24 to school because of kids with disabilities right.  
25 They need in-person learning. And then they do

1  
2 nothing, nothing to plan for my significantly  
3 disabled students. All of our kids in D75 are  
4 mandated to take the bus. There are no busing  
5 contracts.

6 Many kids, because of their disabilities, will  
7 not be able to wear a mask. There is no safety plans  
8 for any of these classrooms to protect either the  
9 adults or the kids.

10 Our kids require physical proximity. They require  
11 paraprofessionals, teachers, speech therapists, to do  
12 hand over hand help using a pencil when I teach art,  
13 helping them to use a paint brush and learn how to do  
14 it independently. There is no plan to keep anybody  
15 safe in this environment. There is nothing.

16 My union has been fighting a really good fight  
17 and I want to thank Michael Mulgrew for all he has  
18 done. We have been trying for months to get these  
19 safety issues answered and we have gotten nothing,  
20 nothing but a shrug from our district and District  
21 75. No answers at all and they pretend to care about  
22 students with disabilities. I want to ask every city  
23 Council Member on this call, ask that question. If  
24 you want to help kids with disabilities get back to  
25

1  
2 school, let's do something to actually help my  
3 students, please.

4 I also just want to say you know, a lot of us are  
5 teachers and this Mayor is like a student who has not  
6 done his homework and then tries to fake it in class.  
7 The Mayor is not fooling -

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and next, we will  
10 hear from Sheree Gibson.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

12 SHEREE GIBSON: Good afternoon. I am Sheree  
13 Gibson, a parent of a Rising 5<sup>th</sup> grader and a parent  
14 leader in community school District 29. From my New  
15 York City public system as a parent, I've heard from  
16 all levels of this system to trust them. Trust  
17 school admin, trust superintendents office, trust  
18 teachers, trust the DOE central, trust the  
19 Chancellor, trust City Council, trust the Mayor.

20 I ask, when have you ever trusted me? When have  
21 you trusted? As a parent, I have no trust of any of  
22 you to keep our child safe and secure in school  
23 buildings because I'm tired of my emotions being used  
24 like a ping pong ball between the Mayor, DOE, UFT,  
25 CSA, D37, as well as many others.



1  
2 I have no trust in remote learning will be  
3 beneficial to my child or not. Why? Because I have  
4 no idea what remote learning will look like and no  
5 priority has been given to informing us. If you  
6 trust parents, talk with us. Really talk with us,  
7 listen to us, hear our concerns, hear our anxiety,  
8 hear our fears, then work with us to address or solve  
9 those issues.

10 Trust us to understand when you don't have an  
11 answer. As a parent, I support a further delay in  
12 reopening of schools. As of today, there are still  
13 too many unknowns for our families in what this new  
14 school year is to look like. My child is asking me  
15 questions that I cannot answer. We are supposed to  
16 be preparing our children for school and we don't  
17 know what to prepare them for. This is a further  
18 example of the inequity going across the system. As  
19 a parent leader, the anxiety and concern about  
20 schools to be opening is high because parents have  
21 not been included consistently in the planning.

22 Information and inclusion are two different  
23 things and even in information it has not been  
24 comprehensive, consistent, frequent across the entire  
25 system. How is this equitable?

1  
2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Please go ahead and finish  
4 your thought.

5 SHEREE GIBSON: Please take a moment to truly  
6 consider that parents need the time to get their kids  
7 prepared just as much as teachers and school  
8 administrations need to get themselves prepared.

9 Thank you.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. The next two  
11 people we have called are not there, so we are next  
12 going to call Tracy LaGrassa followed by Mariela  
13 Graham. Tracy?

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

15 TRACY LAGRASSA: Hi, sorry. Thank you, I'm Tracy  
16 LaGrassa, a high school teacher, member of the MORE  
17 caucus, PHD in biochemistry and New Yorker. The  
18 current U.S. DOE plan is not safe or sane.

19 In early March, one of my confident high school  
20 seniors walking to class palatte and shook. He told  
21 me that he did not feel well. I think I have the  
22 coronavirus and I'm scared I'm going to spread it.  
23 He went to he medical room but he was sent back to  
24 class, no fever. I will never forget the fear on his  
25 face and my helplessness.

1  
2 Later, he told me his parents had the virus. He  
3 was never tested. Those lead to anxiety pure,  
4 students were panicked, parents kept their children's  
5 home discussion centered around the virus and school  
6 closing. All this and members of our community were  
7 getting sick. Students, children, telling me they  
8 felt so sick they couldn't move for days. Too weak  
9 to turn a door knob. Paralyzed with fear of making  
10 their families sick. This is not over.

11 As a teacher, I know schools need to eventually  
12 reopen but we cannot risk returning to this anxiety  
13 and suffering. As a scientist, I also can't help but  
14 see us reopening as a capricious experiment being  
15 done on all of us. One that remains needlessly,  
16 poorly, and dangerously designed.

17 How could this experiment be redesigned so that  
18 my deeply traumatized students and fellow school  
19 staff can return without stupefying anxiety and  
20 without setting off a second wave of COVID in New  
21 York City. At a minimum, three things, COVID testing  
22 that can realistically, timely detect and stop an  
23 outbreak. So, at least twice weekly for everyone in  
24 the school, not this useless current plan of once a  
25

1  
2 month starting in October on 10 to 20 percent of the  
3 school.

4 What epidemiologist or infectious disease expert  
5 signed off on this current plan, given the  
6 availability of PCR testing and the imminent promise  
7 of inexpensive rapid antigen testing?

8 Two, ensure all classrooms have sufficient PPE  
9 and ventilation, specifically classrooms must have  
10 air replaced with clean air four to six time an hour  
11 which can be done using window fans. Keep an air  
12 purifiers and AC's with the correct filters.

13 And three, a phase reopening like you Chair  
14 Treyger, have proposed. A good experiment, in deed a  
15 clinical trial like this is, starts with a smaller  
16 sample sometimes even phased on the most urgent -

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

18 TRACY LAGRASSA: Can I finish my statement?

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, go ahead. Please finish  
20 your statement.

21 TRACY LAGRASSA: Let's first prioritize safe  
22 reopening for students and families who need it most.  
23 In the meantime, please, please, help us get the  
24 resources so that all our students can participate  
25 fully and remote learning, in the spirit of public

1  
2 education, free for everyone. The science is on our  
3 side. This is what our school communities need. We  
4 have been fighting for this for months, why aren't  
5 these requirements part of the current plan? How can  
6 we get them in there? Where is the will? Thank you  
7 so much.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will  
9 hear from Mariela Graham and the panel after that  
10 will be Ellen McHugh, Gloria Corseno, Azalia Volpe  
11 and Paulette Healy. So, Mariela.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

13 MARIELA GRAHAM: My name is Mariela Graham. I am  
14 the parent of three New York City public school  
15 children in grades 5,6, and 8. I am also a member of  
16 the Community Board 12 in Manhattan representing  
17 Washington Heights and Inwood. And I am also the  
18 principal of the high school of Arts and Technology.  
19 A school located in the Martin Luther King campus in  
20 Manhattan.

21 This will be my 14<sup>th</sup> year as a New York City  
22 Principal and it is a job that I absolutely love and  
23 there is nothing that I would want more than to be  
24 back in school with my staff and students. However,  
25 the Martin Luther King campus has no classrooms with

1  
2 windows. The windows that do exist are in the  
3 hallway and none of them open. We are fully  
4 dependent on mechanical ventilation. There have been  
5 no fewer than four walk throughs by various agencies  
6 and groups in the last three weeks. We have yet to  
7 see any reports associated with those walk throughs.  
8 The one report that we had received just from the  
9 UFT, that says that there are significant concerns  
10 with the operation of the ventilation system serving  
11 the building.

12 We have not received a report regarding the  
13 findings of the ventilation action team that visited  
14 the campus on August 25<sup>th</sup> with the infamous tissue  
15 paper, yard stick and binder clips used to measure  
16 air flow.

17 On Monday, August 31<sup>st</sup>, the principals of the  
18 Martin Luther King campus received a list of 18  
19 classrooms that were deemed to have minimal or no air  
20 flow. We were told to relocate those classes to  
21 other rooms. We do not know the basis of how these  
22 18 classrooms were identified.

23 We are asking for two simple things. One,  
24 transparency regarding the process about how a

1  
2 classroom is deemed safe. And two, a quantifiable  
3 measure that confirms a classroom is indeed safe.

4       Until we have these two things, we cannot look at  
5 students and parents and staff in the eye and tell  
6 them that it is safe to return to our campus.

7       Thank you.

8       CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Principal, I want to thank  
9 you and also to all of our educators who have spoken  
10 and I just, I mentioned before principals have been  
11 working none stop, no days off trying to plan for the  
12 impossible. The mantra has been guidance  
13 forthcoming. I think many of your colleagues would  
14 agree but I want to share and if you could elaborate  
15 further, what are the most infuriating parts of the  
16 tissue paper, infamous tissue paper test? Was that  
17 what I was told and I offer you to elaborate further,  
18 is that no one even had the decency of picking up a  
19 phone, calling a school you know, stakeholder, a  
20 school leader and state you know, you might see  
21 something unusual today. You might see someone  
22 coming into your building waving a yard stick with a  
23 piece of toilet paper attached to it.

24       Now, they are going to argue CDC guidance. I  
25 read the guidance; the guidance does not mention

1  
2 toilet paper. It actually talks about the preferred  
3 use of a handheld device to give you a numerical  
4 value on a daily basis but can you just speak to the  
5 communication or a lack thereof between those who are  
6 responsible to support you and speak to the public  
7 about what information if any did you get in advance  
8 of that infamous visit to the school community.

9       MARIELA GRAHAM: There was no advanced notice at  
10 all. A colleague and I were actually in the building  
11 because Martin Luther King planning building, so we  
12 were trying to figure out how do you have students  
13 pass through metal detectors in a socially distanced  
14 way and when we got to the building, that is where we  
15 found out that there were members of SCA. We were  
16 told that our ventilation action team were actually  
17 people from SCA who were there to check ventilation  
18 and I spoke with them. And they had a chart of all  
19 of the rooms in the building and it is a yes or no  
20 check list and they were going into each room. I  
21 went with them to at least four or five classrooms  
22 and they pulled up the stick looking for some sort of  
23 movement of the tissue paper and then it marked as  
24 yes. Regardless of how big the room is, how many of  
25 the vents moved the tissue paper, they told me it was



1  
2 a yes or no checklist and that the mandate was just  
3 to check for airflow, not how much air was there and  
4 that that was the job that they were tasked to do.

5 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And principal, how many  
6 years had you been working in the system?

7 MARIELA GRAHAM: As a principal, this will be my  
8 14<sup>th</sup> year. This will be my 4<sup>th</sup> year in this school  
9 and I was a principal in Brooklyn for 10.

10 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I was a teacher for 8 years  
11 and I'm just asking because maybe I missed this.  
12 Have you ever seen anyone wave a yard stick with a  
13 piece of toilet paper in a classroom before to check  
14 for ventilation?

15 MARIELA GRAHAM: In the Martin Luther King  
16 campus, it is actually not rare for staff members to  
17 hang their own tissue paper on certain vents  
18 actually, to know that there is air flow, so that we  
19 can call the custodian when we can feel that there  
20 isn't enough air flow. So, if you were to visit,  
21 some rooms always have tissue paper hanging from  
22 vents. That is the kind of building that we are in  
23 on a regular basis and I think that given the  
24 pandemic, it is not surprising that really everyone  
25 is alarmed.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I am so sorry for your  
3 entire school community to be subjected to this.  
4 That is unacceptable. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the  
5 largest school system in the country, it is not  
6 acceptable to have daily tissue tests to determine  
7 air flow and I have never seen this before. It's not  
8 normal to me. It's unacceptable to me and it just  
9 proves a point that they are looking to cut corners  
10 to try to advance this impossible agenda and I'd like  
11 to follow up on the Martin Luther King campus because  
12 there is clearly more work to do here and quite  
13 frankly I also had heard reports that the folks from  
14 the bureau field staff who had been conducting some  
15 of these walk throughs with their surveys were quite  
16 frankly you know, concerned themselves that they are  
17 not qualified to make the call on a safe reopen of  
18 the building or not. And we are discouraged from  
19 putting concerns down in writing and rather pick up  
20 you know, call Director of Operations and there is  
21 too many concerns here, unanswered questions and I  
22 really appreciate your courage. This is not an easy  
23 principal. I know what you are doing, this is not  
24 easy and I appreciate you speaking up for your  
25 children, for your entire school community and I'd

1  
2 like to follow up here with the campus because this  
3 is not acceptable. And no school should have to go  
4 through daily tissue paper tests. That is  
5 unacceptable and I will be following up on this case.

6 Thank you Principal.

7 MARIELA GRAHAM: Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member Rosenthal has  
9 a question, if you can unmute Council Member  
10 Rosenthal.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Great, thank you very  
13 much. You know, Chair Treyger I just want to thank  
14 you for your quick response to following up on the  
15 Martin Luther King campus. This campus has been a  
16 problem since I started in the Council and they have  
17 spent years trying to fix the HVAC system to no great  
18 affect. It's remarkable how many experts they have  
19 brought in to fix the HVAC system.

20 I believe the situation there is so dire that the  
21 DOE should open up some place like the Javits Center  
22 for this school. In my experience, in six and a half  
23 years, they have not been able to fix the HVAC and I  
24 can't comprehend how they think they are going to fix  
25

1  
2 it in the next 12 days or 24 days or a year. If they  
3 haven't been able to fix it in 6 years.

4 So, here is an example where using the Javits  
5 Center for this reason will be a life and death  
6 decision. So, I want to thank the principals. I am  
7 so grateful for your coming here to testify and I'm  
8 going to go one step further. I believe that we need  
9 a better solution for the school, the School of  
10 Music, for their high schoolers.

11 Being in the basement of a school is not good  
12 enough. We have argued this over and over again and  
13 here we are, where the rubber meets the road and  
14 we're stuck because of a decision that wasn't a  
15 particularly good one in the first place. But there  
16 is no way that building can open in the state it is  
17 in now. And I really, just to double down Chair  
18 Treyger, I appreciate your taking interest in this  
19 particular building. We need help, we really need  
20 help.

21 Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And I want to note  
23 colleague that Council Member Rosenthal has always  
24 been and continues to be a champion ally in support  
25 of, a direct support to school budgets. Has always

1  
2 worked with me and our key folks to increase fair  
3 student funding and to also allocate money to  
4 increase accessibility because you know, the Mayor  
5 also forgets to mention that most of our buildings  
6 are not truly accessible for all kids and all staff.  
7 So, this is not a reopening plan for all, quite  
8 frankly. But we also, I think my colleague would  
9 agree, that state legislatures, federal folks, we  
10 need state federal support to bring our buildings up  
11 to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

12       The city has a lot of responsibility but it  
13 cannot do this on its own. It doesn't put the Mayor  
14 off the hook because that means when we get the  
15 resources, he has to spend it the right way directly  
16 into our schools and not into his pet projects.

17       So, Council Member Rosenthal has been just an  
18 alley and champion for our school communities and I  
19 definitely want to work with you colleague, because  
20 no school and no zip code in New York should be  
21 conducting tissue paper tests to determine air flow.  
22 That is just unacceptable, unacceptable and thank you  
23 for your support colleague.

24       COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Alright, thank you to this  
25 panel. We will now go to the next one. The next

1  
2 panel will be Ellen McHugh, Gloria Corsino, Azalia  
3 Volpe and Paulette Healy. We will start with Ellen.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 ELLEN MCHUGH: Good afternoon. Before I start, I  
6 want to give a shout out to my City Council person  
7 Justin Brannan, who is an education advocate and the  
8 son of the inimitable and newly retired Mary Brannan  
9 kindergarten teacher.

10 My name is Ellen McHugh and I am the Co-Chair of  
11 the Citywide Council on Special Education. Like many  
12 others on this group, I have been doing this for a  
13 very long time. 30 years is not an unknown amount of  
14 time for advocates to work.

15 Returning to school after the pandemic may seem  
16 to be a dream right now but it will happen. It will  
17 only happen because parents acted as teacher,  
18 therapist, counselor, mentor, nutritionist, and  
19 advocate. Our students, no matter how many times  
20 leadership in this community called them their most  
21 vulnerable or most precious, are often an  
22 afterthought. At this point now, we should drop  
23 fuzzy phrases about different enabled or special  
24 needs and use real language. These children have  
25 disabilities, their disabilities are as much a part

1  
2 of them as being tall, strong, funny, or having brown  
3 eyes. Yet we treat them as the only thing that would  
4 define or describe them is their disability.

5 Oh, that kid in the wheelchair. Oh, yeah, did  
6 you see the kid who uses sign language. Oh, yeah,  
7 she's an SWD, Student with a Disability or worse yet,  
8 he's a SPED. When I heard that the first time, I  
9 thought they were calling the child a spud.

10 We ask how many children do we need to create an  
11 ICT class. It's usually shorthand for those kids are  
12 over there. You know, we have to do something about  
13 them but I'm really not sure. Children with  
14 disabilities don't move up from PreK to kindergarten,  
15 they turn by.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

17 ELLEN MCHUGH: I don't know what that is, I still  
18 don't know what that is. If our goal is to use the  
19 lessons learned from this pandemic to effect our  
20 children, why can't we change our ways of teaching  
21 and improve our learning? Pre-pandemic our students  
22 were struggling. Post-pandemic we take a hard look  
23 at the past and learn from it and stop repeating the  
24 past. These children, all children deserve a new,  
25 proven, age appropriate education. They deserve our

1  
2 respect and recognition. We have a responsibility to  
3 recognize their diversity which the DOE refuses to  
4 do. Their diligence and their dedication. We have a  
5 responsibility to change the way the system educates,  
6 includes, and respects all children.

7 I would dare you to be inclusive. Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and next we will  
9 hear from Gloria.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

11 GLORIA CORSINO: Sorry about that. Good  
12 afternoon everybody. Before I get started, I want to  
13 take a moment and thank the UFT and especially Susan  
14 Perez for including me on a walk through of a  
15 district 75 school in the Bronx. Susan combed  
16 through that building like a crime scene  
17 investigator. She gave me a whole new perspective of  
18 safety in a school building. Let's remember that  
19 safety for students and staff should come first. No  
20 one wants their children in the school more than  
21 myself but I want it done safely.

22 I want to address the topics of parent engagement  
23 and translation. This is not a new topic for me but  
24 a necessary one. When we are living in such a trying  
25 time. I feel as if [DROPPED AUDIO 3:12:54] left on



1 the outside of the door where they are not [DROPPED  
2 AUDIO 3:12:58] in their native language. Parents can  
3 only be successful advocate when they have been given  
4 the tools to do so effectively. This just does not  
5 happen with IEP meetings or conferences. It also  
6 happens when there are information sessions held by  
7 parent leaders, organizations, and CBO's, such as the  
8 CCSE for example who represent students and family  
9 citywide where educated and served by the DOE.  
10

11 And because of a technicality of a ten day notice  
12 for translation for parents, we will be holding an  
13 information session tonight via Zoom that will lead  
14 many non-English speaking parents without answers on  
15 busing and how their children will be transported to  
16 school safety.

17 If faces charged with supporting Education  
18 Council, this would be a perfect time to show that  
19 they can certainly work to assist them by expediting  
20 this request more efficiently and during these trying  
21 times. Instead we are being refused this  
22 accommodation by enforcing a rule of a ten day  
23 notice. That seems when this information will be  
24 crucial for parents to make the decision for their  
25 children in traveling to schools that may not be in

1  
2 the communities they reside in. How heartbreaking  
3 for our families.

4 Let's stop stating that we are working -

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will  
7 hear from Azalia.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

9 AZALIA VOLPE: Alright, great, thank you very  
10 much. I hope everyone can hear me because I think  
11 I'm having some issues. So, just a thumbs up would  
12 be great.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yeah, we can hear you.

14 AZALIA VOLPE: Thank you kindly, I appreciate  
15 that. As a member of the Citywide Council of Special  
16 Education, I will focus my advocacy on the 277,000  
17 children who were in receipt of the Special Ed  
18 services in New York City.

19 As I cannot focus my energy on the  
20 inconsistencies that continuously come out of the DOE  
21 and the Mayor's Office because we don't have enough  
22 time for that.

23 While we are speaking of remote learning, I would  
24 like to remind all of us that in January of 2020, the  
25 DOE entered into a voluntary resolution agreement

1  
2 with OCR, the Office of Civil Rights to provide  
3 interpretive and translation services for our  
4 families of limited English proficiency.

5 There has yet to be any mandates that I know of  
6 that have been issued by the DOE or at least on a  
7 schoolwide level. So, that is concerning to me.

8 Furthermore, my concern is and our concern as CCSE is  
9 that Zoom meetings are taken place or in other  
10 platforms for IEP's. There are not translation or  
11 interpretive services being offered to parents unless  
12 it's upon a parents request. This is ridiculous.  
13 This must end.

14 As such, I would ask that this panel of City  
15 Council Members and parents and educators, please  
16 remember that we are also speaking about 277,000  
17 children. 93 percent of those children are children  
18 of color who need to understand what is going on with  
19 their schools and their services provided.

20 So, I will ask that we do not lose focus on these  
21 children. Where we are asking that we continue along  
22 the path of offering services to these most  
23 educationally fragile children.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

25 AZALIA VOLPE: Thank you.

1  
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you to this panel. We  
3 will now call the next panel up. Oh, no, I'm sorry,  
4 Paulette needs to testify, apologies.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

6 PAULETTE HEALY: Hi, can you hear me?

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes.

8 PAULETTE HEALY: Sorry, I'm in a spotty area. My  
9 name is Paulette Healy and I am a member of the  
10 Citywide Council for Special Education and a parent  
11 member of PRESS NYC.

12 I am here to speak out against a disregard for  
13 our students and families in special education in the  
14 latest year reopening plan. Our students make up 20  
15 percent of the total students enrolled in NYC schools  
16 and need very specific supports and structures in  
17 place. Yet a response from schools such as, we'll  
18 get to it when we get to it or we will figure it out  
19 when it comes, does not tell our parents how related  
20 services will be provided. It does not tell us how  
21 ICT classes will look in the learning model. It does  
22 not tell us if adapted Ed will be restricted because  
23 our kids can't keep a mask on and it does not tell us  
24 who is taking our kids to school with no bus contract  
25 in place.

1  
2 Not to mention the lack of necessary PPE that is  
3 needed for our parents who provide toileting services  
4 or the lack of ventilation in the school basements  
5 where a lot of our co-located D75 programs are at.

6 The fact that the Chancellor isn't here today  
7 speaks volumes but it falls in line with how he has  
8 continued to ignore our special education families  
9 and disrespect outspoken traumatized families and  
10 students overall.

11 The Chancellor cannot talk about putting our most  
12 vulnerable population first without addressing these  
13 deal breakers. Ventilation issues will not be solved  
14 in ten days. Right now, we have reports from  
15 families getting calls from their schools, asking  
16 them to remove them off their IEP's. Student in  
17 Horizon programs are being displaced at the community  
18 settings without parents consent. COVID hasn't  
19 disappeared. I buried my Aunt two weeks ago. My  
20 brother-in-law who is an MTA worker, still feeling  
21 the effects left behind from COVID, back when he had  
22 it in April. He can't still take a breath.

23 Our children are in tears, begging you not to  
24 sacrifice their wellbeing. Our school staff are not

1  
2 expendable. No plan is acceptable until our concerns  
3 are recognized and respected.

4 Finally, I just want to thank your service as  
5 Council Members for pushing this narrative and  
6 supporting our families throughout this pandemic and  
7 special shout out to Justin Brannan –

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, that concludes oh  
10 –

11 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you very much. Thank  
12 the panel.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: That concludes the testimony  
14 for this panel. We will now move on to our next  
15 panel. Our next panel is Johanna Garcia, Harlem  
16 McFall, Cynthia Nixon, and Christine Marinoni. We  
17 will start with Johanna Garcia.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

19 JOHANNA GARCIA: I'm grateful to the work that  
20 went into this Resolution. My name is Johanna Garcia  
21 and I am a previous CEC6 President as well as a  
22 member of PRESS NYC.

23 While I am grateful for the Resolution, at the  
24 same time, I am disappointed to see that parent  
25 voices were not included in this Resolution. PRESS

1  
2 NYC set the terms for their reopening debate with our  
3 deal breakers framing. I speak here as a mother who  
4 is raising three children with very different  
5 learning needs. Against the backdrop of historic  
6 underfunding of our school community. The poor  
7 planning during this pandemic continues the neglect  
8 of the needs of students and parents who keep waiting  
9 for the city to finally step up. I can tell you  
10 first hand, the utter failure to plan and run a  
11 robust remote learning experience is pushing the  
12 physical and mental health of our families and  
13 educators to the breaking point.

14 We know in-person learning is preferable but we  
15 can't risk it, not even on September 21<sup>st</sup>. Based on  
16 the scattered shock communication stakeholders have  
17 had to hear from the DOE. Just yesterday at a D6  
18 equity and remote learning meeting, I learned that  
19 the special ed teachers have been given no plans for  
20 how to work with kids who have IEP's. There is no  
21 guidance for custodians for cleaning practices. No  
22 mention of how we're supporting a heroic cafeteria  
23 workers who exposed themselves the past six months,  
24 so they can feed the hungry.

1  
2           Inequity plagues us at every turn and we as  
3 parents know it comes down to money. How are we  
4 going to make remote learning work for all our  
5 students, not just the ones whose parents can stay  
6 home and support them or pay for private tutoring  
7 pods. How do we expect outdoor learning not to  
8 exacerbate inequity when it's been thrown into the  
9 mix at the last minute without regard for  
10 environmental conditions. We need to plan, a plan  
11 that centers on equity and forefront to English  
12 Language learners, students with disabilities and  
13 those experiencing food and housing insecurities.

14           Anything less says to our Black and Brown working  
15 class families that your banner waving and embrace of  
16 Black Lives Matter earlier this summer was just empty  
17 rhetoric and PR.

18           COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and next, we will  
19 hear from Harlem McFall. Harlem?

20           SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

21           HARLEM MCFALL: Hi, my name is Harlem McFall. I  
22 am going to be 7<sup>th</sup> grader at UNMS Middle School in  
23 District 1. I am speaking today to give my opinion  
24 from the perspective of a kid and not parents or  
25 teachers or people in power.



1  
2           When my mom asked if my brother and I wanted to  
3 be in school or online school for the next year, I  
4 said online school. She explained to me and my  
5 brother that we would have to wear masks all day at  
6 school and be in the same room from the morning to  
7 the end of the day and online school would be the  
8 same that we did when we went into quarantine.

9           I would not like to be in a class for hours with  
10 a hard to breath mask on and not being able to talk  
11 and hang out with my other classmates. Basically,  
12 being tortured by teachers and parents. My mom  
13 listens to a lot of news on her phone and we talk  
14 about how many people are getting sick and dying all  
15 over the world.

16           I hear that Black people and Latino people are  
17 getting sick and dying more than anybody else. I  
18 don't want to die. I guess what I am saying is to  
19 wait to open school until we feel safe to go back and  
20 make learning and online school better for all kids.

21           COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and next we will  
22 hear from Cynthia.

23           SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

24           CHRISTINE MARIONI: Good afternoon. My name is  
25 Christine Marinoni and I am speaking on behalf of my

1  
2 wife Cynthia Nixon and our family. Olympia will be  
3 speaking on my behalf following me.

4 Our 9-year-old goes to school in District 1 where  
5 like every one else, there isn't money that we need  
6 to open safely. Like many New York schools, our  
7 school is significantly overcrowded and one of the  
8 most important things the city could be doing to help  
9 us open safely is to find extra space to spread  
10 people out. Instead, they said every school for  
11 themselves. Every school had to make do with their  
12 own resources, which is ridiculous. So much for  
13 equity, we're putting the city's might and muscle  
14 into what should be an all hands on deck effort whose  
15 outcome could save or literally cost lives.

16 Our school doesn't have enough teachers, so they  
17 will be exposed to a dangerous number. Students  
18 making the pods all but irrelevant and I don't know  
19 about this UFT agreement on randomized testing. But  
20 in LA they are making plans to test every student and  
21 staff before coming into schools and regularly after  
22 that. Why isn't that our goal here?

23 I am appreciative that the City Council is now  
24 speaking up but I want to remind you the budget you  
25 passed just this last June that cut almost \$1 billion

1  
2 from schools instead of the NYPD. All but 9 of you  
3 and some of those 9 are here on this call today and  
4 we appreciate your voice. But all but 9 of you voted  
5 for a budget that went to the MET to make sure not  
6 one single police officer would be laid off. Even if  
7 that meant that now the city is now sacrificing  
8 critical school staff that we need to open school  
9 safely.

10 There is no point in crying over spilt milk, I  
11 understand and I am thankful that you are  
12 acknowledging we don't have the resources needed to  
13 open school safely now, but we need you to make up  
14 for lost time and stand up strong. We need you to go  
15 as an entire body to Albany and demand that this  
16 governor who wants to cut 20 percent more out of our  
17 schools, quit playing a shell game with our  
18 childrens, our teachers, our communities, and our  
19 city's leaders.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

21 CHRISTINE MARINONI: Thank you.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. If we can now  
23 unmute the Christine Marinoni account.

24 We're having a - we can't hear you.  
25

1  
2 CHRISTINE MARINONI: I'm trying to take off my  
3 headphones, can you hear me now?

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, now we can.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

6 OLYMPIA KASI: Okay, thank you. So, my name is  
7 Olympia Kasi[SP?] and my son will be in kindergarten  
8 at the Community School in District 1 this fall and I  
9 want to thank you for holding this hearing, even if  
10 the Administration has ignored it. This is very  
11 important.

12 It's important because the opening plans are  
13 underfunded and that's why they are unsafe and on  
14 September 21<sup>st</sup>, they will still be unsafe. We need  
15 to prioritize in-school learning for the highest need  
16 students and we need to expand regional enrichment  
17 centers for essential workers, students with  
18 disabilities, students in temporary housing, English  
19 learners and all at risk students and we need to do  
20 that now.

21 We need to invest in a robust and comprehensive  
22 remote learning and we need to invest in districtwide  
23 learning now because unfortunately we need it in the  
24 spring and the fall of 2021. Outdoor learning will  
25 be very important, not just for the safety because

1  
2 it's safer to be outdoors but for social, physical,  
3 and emotional development of our children that have  
4 bene quarantined and they haven't been seeing other  
5 human beings. And that's why we need all this to be  
6 equitable and it will only be equitable if you invest  
7 in it districtwide. Districtwide planning now and  
8 investment now.

9 I ask for a lot of investment and I know that New  
10 York is the wealthiest city in the globe and I don't  
11 understand why we are planning for this one of a kind  
12 challenge with complete lack of [INAUDIBLE 3:27:13].  
13 Why are we accepting budget cuts? Christine said it  
14 already, we need to tax the rich and we need to pass  
15 Senator Jackson's bill.

16 You, as City Council, have done us wrong. You  
17 passed a budget that cut \$1 billion form our schools,  
18 so please join us now and let's do the right thing.  
19 Let's all call on Governor Cuomo to tax the rich and  
20 fund our schools because the lives of all New Yorkers  
21 depend on that. Our kids and the New Yorkers that  
22 you all represent are not playing in political games  
23 in order to extract more federally.

24 Thank you.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, I want to thank the  
3 panel and thank them for their advocacy for more  
4 resources to city schools and I just want to remind  
5 folks that I was a public school teacher and schools  
6 mean the world to me.

7 And I also want to let folks know that during  
8 this Council's tenure, of this under Corey Johnson,  
9 this is a Council that added \$125 million at Fair  
10 Student Funding a couple years back. We added 200  
11 new social workers for the first time in history.  
12 That much in the last budget. This is a year that  
13 with the pandemic and the shutdown of a lot of the  
14 economy, a \$9 billion budget deficit and I just want  
15 to make it very clear, just from a factual  
16 standpoint, that the City of New York has a legal  
17 obligation to advance a balanced budget by July 1<sup>st</sup>.  
18 And if we did not advance a balanced budget by July  
19 1<sup>st</sup>, because there was disagreement still with the  
20 Mayor. We still disagree on a number of things.

21 But what happens is that you would turn the city  
22 over to Governor Cuomo through a State Financial  
23 Control Board. So, we hear criticism of the  
24 Governor, I criticize the Governor. The Governor has  
25 not fulfilled the campaign for fiscal equity, legal

1  
2 obligation promises. The Governor chronically  
3 underfunds, not just the New York City School  
4 District but a number of school districts.

5 I support Senator Jackson's bill to raise taxes  
6 on the wealthy. I support bond authority but if the  
7 City Council voted to not advance any budget  
8 whatsoever by July 1<sup>st</sup>, the Governor would form a  
9 state financial control board and he would take over  
10 the city's finances all together. And to be clear,  
11 the Governor already has extraordinary power by the  
12 State Legislature. The State Legislature voted to  
13 give the Governor extraordinary power over the budget  
14 and policy and he should hand that power back to  
15 NYSED, the State Education Department immediately.  
16 But he still holds the cards.

17 So, I do not support, I do not support handing  
18 the city finances over to Governor Cuomo and we have  
19 a lot more work to do and to be clear about the  
20 schools, the \$1 billion or so folks in terms of DOE  
21 budgets, we saved \$100 million in fair student  
22 funding cut. The Mayor wanted to cut \$100 million in  
23 fair student funding for the public. So, you know  
24 what that means, those are city tax levy dollars.  
25 Fair student funding, FSF. That's the funding stream

1  
2 that is so precious to school principals who are on  
3 this Zoom and they know what FSF means. They know  
4 that that's the stream that funds your teachers, your  
5 social workers, your counselors, your  
6 paraprofessional. If that \$100 million cup would  
7 have advanced, thousands of school positions would  
8 have been lost, thousands.

9 We also restored Single Shepard, which is a  
10 critical program in central Brooklyn and in the South  
11 Bronx for social workers and counselors, including  
12 for the late principal Erin Garry from letters,  
13 school where she passed away tragically and her  
14 students desperately needed those social workers and  
15 counselors to stay in the building. We saved that.

16 This was a painful budget, there is no victory  
17 laps but I will make it very clear that we saved  
18 thousands of school positions and if the Council did  
19 not pass any budget whatsoever, Governor Cuomo would  
20 be in control of New York City at this time, which I  
21 do not support.

22 Thank you Malcom. You can go to the next panel.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Council Member and  
24 thank you panel. We will move on to the next panel,  
25



1  
2 which is Tom Sheppard, Shakira Oliver, Atina Bazin,  
3 Dr. Maryam. We will start with Tom Sheppard.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 TOM SHEPPARD: Good afternoon. Thank you Chair  
6 Treyger and the Committee for giving me this  
7 opportunity to testify before you.

8 My name is Tom Sheppard and I am the CC  
9 President's Appointee to the Panel for Educational  
10 Policy. I am not speaking for the panel but I am  
11 speaking as the CC Presidents Appointee on the panel.  
12 I am here in support of Resolution 1410.

13 Here is the deal, during our last panel meeting  
14 on August 19<sup>th</sup>, we spent almost ten hours hearing  
15 public comments from about 160 people. We heard from  
16 students, parents, teachers, community based  
17 organizations, and various city and state elected  
18 officials. 159 out of 160 people who made comments  
19 opposed the reopening of school buildings until it is  
20 safe to do so.

21 What's clear to them and what seems to be clear  
22 to almost everyone except for Mayor de Blasio, is  
23 that it is not safe to reopen these buildings. I'm  
24 not going to get into all the reasons because I am  
25 sure that many other people are doing that today.

1  
2 What I will add however, is that MLK is an example of  
3 a broken system. Whether we are talking about toilet  
4 paper on a stick or a collapsed roof at Taft High  
5 School campus in the Bronx, these buildings are death  
6 traps.

7 As parents, we want our children to go back to  
8 school. We want to go back to work. We want to  
9 reconnect in person with our families and our  
10 friends. We want to be around each other, spend time  
11 with each other, and live our lives in peace.

12 But we also understand that 6 million people have  
13 been infected with this virus and 181,000 souls have  
14 been lost to it. We all know that it is not safe.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

16 TOM SHEPPARD: I need to make something clear.  
17 May I have a few more seconds, please?

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, you can wrap up your  
19 thoughts.

20 TOM SHEPPARD: Thank you. I need to make  
21 something clear. My issue is that there is this  
22 narrative that things are being shaped. It's kind of  
23 like a binary choice, right. Whether you want to go  
24 back to school or whether you want buildings to be  
25 reopened or not.

1  
2 But I'm here today to respectfully submit that  
3 this is not a binary choice. It's a conditional  
4 choice. As parents, we are saying that we want our  
5 children to go back to school buildings, only when it  
6 is safe. Because of Department of Education has not  
7 answered all the questions about the condition of  
8 these buildings and their ability to keep us all safe  
9 in them, right. With so many unanswered questions  
10 about what blended and remote learning will even look  
11 like and until we can get past the half-baked  
12 policies with no plans or resources to support them,  
13 we as parents are uncomfortable placing our children  
14 into this environment. Thank you.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and next, we will  
16 hear from Shakira.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

18 SHAKIRA OLIVER: Yes, I am a math and science  
19 educator and a consultant and a parent in District 23  
20 in Brooklyn and I'm going to speak to you from two  
21 lens here.

22 During the height of the pandemic, there were  
23 constantly nightly sirens with ambulances to enter  
24 the emergency room of our nearest hospital at  
25 Brookdale. And of course, multiple sirens and police

1 escorts and there was literally no amount of  
2 distraction that could take your mind away from the  
3 urgency to save lives.  
4

5 And this same community where I live now lost the  
6 first Administrator at Brooklyn Democracy Academy.  
7 This pandemic has impacted Black and Latino families  
8 in my area of Brooklyn significantly and so, with  
9 schools reopening in an unsafe manner, they will once  
10 again be disproportionately targeted for their health  
11 and safety with a double burden here.

12 So, according to the Brooklyn Eagle newspaper,  
13 over half of all the Bed Stuy schools currently and  
14 in Park Slope have issues with ventilation and  
15 parents are trusting elected officials are making the  
16 right decisions and keeping them informed.

17 And so, now, I am going to switch from that lens,  
18 you know the parent and then the educator part of me  
19 now is speaking. You know, research suggests that  
20 when schools establish effective family engagement,  
21 students benefit, but the city hasn't effectively  
22 engaged parents on the key issues necessary for  
23 remote learning, supporting multiple children  
24 learning at home, and the proper usage of these  
25 remote learning platforms.

1  
2 The district has to provide more accountability,  
3 mental and social emotional support as these schools  
4 reopen and definitely sufficient community engagement  
5 with the planning. And though it is delayed, it is  
6 still an insufficient amount of time. I have an  
7 assisted Washington DC and policy makers there and Ed  
8 leaders there with establishing the need for equity  
9 across our remote learning platforms and really  
10 providing supports.

11 I would suggest -

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

13 SHAKERA OLIVER: I would suggest one  
14 recommendation. If I can finish my sentence?

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yeah, please do.

16 SHAKERA OLIVER: Okay, thank you. One medical  
17 organization reached out to me and they are not  
18 servicing Nassau county. It's  
19 [IMBAmmedical@schools.takeaction.xyz](mailto:IMBAmmedical@schools.takeaction.xyz) and I did submit  
20 this in my written testimony that I uploaded on a  
21 platform and they have integrated testing from Admin  
22 to bus personnel all the way across in a cloud-base  
23 platform and also, communication, so that they can  
24 handle connecting the data and the frequency of air  
25 ventilation and those proper procedures.

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Thank you so much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Council Member Rosenthal, I saw your hand went down but now back up, so I apologize. So, Council Member Rosenthal.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Alright, thank you so much. I actually have a question for someone on the last panel. So, is Johanna Garcia still available? If she is, could we bring her back in to – as a panelist? I have a question for her.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, we will go ahead and unmute Johanna. Just give us one moment.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Great, thank you so much. I'm not sure, I mean, she may have hopped off.

And just to keep it going, the reason I'm asking to chat with Johanna is because I've known her for actually decades. When she worked for Council Member Jackson, we worked together on the schools in the northern part of my district, which is now an area that she is more focused on and I just, I know she is compassionate and a great advocate for the schools in her district. And I'm wondering specifically about those schools and what's going on. If she could just

1  
2 be a little more specific because I know how much she  
3 really knows each of those schools very well.

4 Johanna, welcome back.

5 JOHANNA GARCIA: Hi, sorry.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: No, no, no, I mean, I  
7 was just saying I know you and I have worked together  
8 for years on the schools issues. And I know how well  
9 and intimately you know the schools in your part of  
10 the district, which kind of overlaps with mine. I  
11 was wondering if you have a specific sample or  
12 concerns for district? Just want you think is going  
13 on specifically.

14 JOHANNA GARCIA: So, specifically in District 6,  
15 there is a huge concern about how children who are  
16 English language learners and students with  
17 disabilities, IEP's are actually going to get  
18 services. That's closely followed by the fact that  
19 the hybrid does not address that we have a huge  
20 number of parents who are part of the working class  
21 and it doesn't do anything in terms of not  
22 understanding that wrap around service of support.

23 Teachers are not childcare but at the same time,  
24 parents need the DOE to kind of think out of the box  
25 as to what happens with these kids, understanding

1  
2 that safety and equity is at the heart of that  
3 conversation and that hasn't been going on.

4 And I will also say that because of a lot of the  
5 miss information or back tracking from the DOE, there  
6 is a risk that we have in our district where parents  
7 who just want their kids to be educated, being pitted  
8 against teachers and principals who also want kids to  
9 be educated. But everyone wants everyone to be safe  
10 because no one knows what to believe or what is going  
11 on.

12 And in a district like ours -

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Please finish your thought.

15 JOHANNA GARCIA: Real quick, there is so much, we  
16 can't afford to be divided. So, we're trying to keep  
17 it together.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Last quick question  
19 Chair, if it is okay. Do you feel that in your  
20 district all the kids have the remote learning  
21 devices they need?

22 So, how is that even possible? How is that  
23 possible? Chair Treyger, that is a mind blowing  
24 answer to me.



1  
2 JOHANNA GARCIA: Can I just add, I heard from a  
3 Special Ed teacher that it's not just about having  
4 the device but there are some children who don't even  
5 know how to get on the device. There is just no way.  
6 There has been attempts to trying to get a device  
7 because we're not even thinking about that home  
8 school connection. We're taking it for granted that  
9 every child is equipped with this. These adults in  
10 their house, they know how to do those things and  
11 that's just not true.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Bingo and that, I have  
13 heard that over and over that the principals know  
14 that the kids may have the device but the parents  
15 don't even know how to use the device. I mean, not  
16 for anyone's - no fault of anyone's, it's just not  
17 something in their lives. And so, the DOE needs to  
18 take that extra step of responsibility of educating  
19 the parents, so they can be even involved in their  
20 childrens learning and the parents can help the  
21 children use the device.

22 So, Johanna, thank you for bringing that up and  
23 thank you for the amazing work that you have done for  
24 decades for the children in your district. It's  
25 always been a pleasure working with you.

1  
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will hear from Atina B  
3 please.

4 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And I just want to add  
5 quickly Malcom that Johanna raised some very  
6 important points, so did my colleague Council Member  
7 Rosenthal. It's not just parents who need more  
8 support. Remember, as a former high school teacher,  
9 a number of my students were caretakers for their  
10 younger siblings. High school students are you know,  
11 being asked and stepping up to help their younger  
12 siblings with remote learning. Which means that high  
13 school kids don't have enough time to focus on their  
14 own instruction as well.

15 So, the remote learning certainly has a lot of  
16 gaps to address. But very important points, thank  
17 you. Next.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Atina.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

20 ATINA BAZIN: Thank you. Good afternoon and  
21 thank you Council Members. Thank you for the  
22 opportunity to testify. My name is Atina Bazin, I am  
23 speaking as a parent advocate and a member of  
24 District 28 Equity Now. We stand in solidarity with  
25 teachers, administrators, and families in support of

1  
2 the Resolution to delay in-person learning and we  
3 support robust, inequitable remote learning that is  
4 culturally responsive as well as trauma informed.

5 This is an exercise in futility. I am not  
6 understanding what is going on but essentially what  
7 we are doing is attempting to prop up normal, at the  
8 expense of our most marginalized.

9 And primarily to the benefit of the most  
10 advantage among us. We are in a global pandemic, so  
11 I would urge everyone to heed Dr. Tallaj's warnings.  
12 This is essentially inhumane what we are trying to do  
13 here.

14 As a parent of Black biracial children, I just  
15 have to say it is especially troubling for me and my  
16 family members because we are impacted as well. How  
17 can we utter the words Black Lives Matter? While  
18 simultaneously placing Black and Brown communities in  
19 harms way again. This is nothing short of  
20 performative allyship, which has deadly consequences.

21 In-person learning during a global pandemic is a  
22 deal breaker full stop. Elected officials do not  
23 have a safe enough plan to protect teachers, workers,  
24 students, and their families, so why are we  
25 pretending? This is nothing short of an absurd and

1  
2 inhumane pretense to pawn off what is safe in the  
3 face of overwhelming scientific data that says  
4 otherwise.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

6 ATINA BAZIN: It is not safe. May I finish, I'm  
7 actually nearly done.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, please do.

9 ATINA BAZIN: Thank you. We risk losing human  
10 life and children do risk more than trauma. It's  
11 trauma on top of trauma. They risk losing parents,  
12 grandparents, loved ones, and unwittingly being  
13 agents of something that is horrible, of being agents  
14 of death. And further traumatizing old children,  
15 especially our most vulnerable and most marginalized.

16 Teacher and Administrators are not frontline  
17 workers and neither are children and they should not  
18 be pushed into the frontlines, neither should parents  
19 or children be forced to assume so much risk.

20 We are pitting parents, administrators, and  
21 teachers all against one another and we're putting  
22 everyone in an untenable position of having to make a  
23 false choice between safety and learning versus  
24 making enough money to feed and house their children  
25 and family members. We all need protection and

1  
2 assurances and like with 911, we cannot rely on the  
3 patch work of attenuable safety measures and empty  
4 promises. We've been here before. We know exactly  
5 what this is.

6 What COVID lays bear is who we are as a society,  
7 as individuals and what our legacy burdens are  
8 collectively. But it also is an opportunity in  
9 closing, to live out our stated values. To be the  
10 equitable society that we all claim we want to be.  
11 It is an opportunity to lead. Black Lives Matter in  
12 schools.

13 Thank you.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and next, I  
15 apologize if I am mispronouncing people's names but  
16 next, we will hear from Dr. Maryam.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

18 MARYAM BENCHEIKH-ELLIS: Hello everyone. I would  
19 like to thank Chair Mark Treyger and I would like to  
20 thank everyone on this panel and I would like to  
21 share with you a few points.

22 We are talking about reopening the schools and I  
23 would like to just remind everyone what happened this  
24 summer when we reopened all the societies worldwide.  
25 There was a great surge in cases worldwide.

1  
2 I would like to share with you something  
3 concerning, what scientists wrote about, more than  
4 200 scientists wrote a letter to WHO, World Health  
5 Organization to declare the COVID-19 as having also  
6 an airborne mode of transmission. And this has been  
7 published in the clinical infectious disease and it  
8 has been signed off by more than 240 scientists.  
9 Which means that not only are there the droplets but  
10 there are also aerosols which are much smaller  
11 droplets that can stay more in the air and travel  
12 further than the droplets.

13 So, that means if we need more distancing. Okay,  
14 next point, I'd like to share with you also what has  
15 been published by the Academy, American Academy of  
16 Pediatrics, showing that - I know this is going to  
17 speak volume. Showing the children infections,  
18 hospitalization and death rising two or three times  
19 higher than adults during the last three months.

20 Now, listen to this, Latino children are eight  
21 times more likely to be hospitalized than White  
22 children. Black children are five times more likely  
23 to be hospitalized than White children. This has  
24 been published by the American Academy of Pediatrics  
25 and has been also published by CDC in volume 69.

1  
2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

3 MARYAM BENCHEIKH-ELLIS: Oh Lord, can I just  
4 finish quickly.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You can just wrap up your  
6 thoughts, yes.

7 MARYAM BENCHEIKH-ELLIS: Okay. And I would like  
8 to finish this by saying that the ventilation system  
9 is totally none working in our schools. That the  
10 buildings are too old. We should really concentrate  
11 on full remote learning, outdoor learning. Provide  
12 the teachers with tech support. Teachers have no  
13 tech support for remote. Provide the children with  
14 social and emotional, provide the children with the  
15 device with internet and provide the parents with  
16 workshop. Non-speaking English parents who still do  
17 not have their device.

18 And I would like just to finish by saying that  
19 one of the French officials said, oh, well, school  
20 has been obligatory and mandatory for the past 400  
21 years. We are not going to be intimidated by an  
22 invisible virus.

23 I say that we have to take a pose and remember  
24 that as soon as we have a vaccine we will be able to  
25 go back to the old fashioned, modified, school way of

1  
2 life. But right now, and as someone else said it  
3 already actually the UFT President said it, it will  
4 be about three years of waves coming in and out, in  
5 and out of this. We cannot have the bubbles of all  
6 these families with these children remixing again.

7 It will be a disaster because our schools are not  
8 ready for that. Thank you.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you to this panel. We  
10 will now move onto the next one. I do just want to  
11 remind everyone that we are panel, we got to panel 10  
12 and we have 30 panels in total. So, when the  
13 Sergeant calls the two minute clock, we just ask that  
14 everybody please wraps up their final thoughts. All  
15 submitted testimony to the Committee is read by  
16 Committee staff. So, your words will be read in full  
17 but in the interest of time, we just ask that folks  
18 wrap up as soon as the Sergeant calls the two minute  
19 timer.

20 So, the next panel we will have Dr. Christopher  
21 Hazelton, Kim Watkins, and Jessica Kim. We will  
22 start with Dr. Christopher.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

24 CHRISTOPHER HAZELTON: Hi Council Member Treyger,  
25 thank you for allowing me this opportunity to speak.



1  
2 I am currently a teacher in District 14. This is my  
3 17<sup>th</sup> year as a public school educator. I've been in  
4 Charter and public and I will say this is the most  
5 disfunction I have ever seen in the NYC DOE.

6 So, not to long ago in March, UFT threatened to  
7 go to court to close schools. The Mayor's argument  
8 was the numbers are low, even with an uptick in  
9 cases. The Mayor got it wrong and New York City  
10 became the epicenter.

11 The Mayor is using the same data to reopen  
12 schools because the numbers are low. Let's hope and  
13 pray we do not have a repeat of March but what  
14 happens when we do? Why is most of New York State  
15 going remote and their cases were never as high as  
16 ours, not even close.

17 New York City could have saved billions of  
18 dollars keeping schools remote, instead the failed  
19 leadership at City Hall is asking New York State to  
20 bail us out. We are wasting taxpayer dollars. UFT,  
21 CSA, parents, students, health experts, DC37,  
22 custodial engineers or politicians and after 17 years  
23 of living in New York City and working in NYC DOE  
24 public schools, public and charter, like many of my  
25 colleagues, we are being forced to pack up and leave

1  
2 New York City because as the Mayor mentioned the  
3 parents need to work and students need to be in  
4 school.

5 I am one of those single parents who needs to  
6 work and my child needs to be in school to, when he  
7 says those types of things.

8 And I just want to end and for the sake of time,  
9 the UFT survey that people have mentioned or I know  
10 Michael Mulgrew has done a great job speaking on our  
11 behalf.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

13 CHRISTOPHER HAZELTON: We are not sure. And then  
14 there is this, thank you.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will  
16 hear from Kim Watkins.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

18 KIM WATKINS: Can you guys hear me?

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, go ahead.

20 KIM WATKINS: Hi, hi, hello, good afternoon. I am  
21 Kim Watkins and I am President of CEC3. I am a  
22 member of many of the parent advocacy organizations  
23 that have formed as a result of our conditions since  
24 the beginning of this year, supporting PRESS NYC, and  
25 a staunch advocate and supporter of the MORE caucus

1 and I want to thank you Chair Treyger for holding  
2 this hearing and for sitting through all of this  
3 testimony. It's really informative hearing from  
4 everyone. My remarks, I want to limit to making sure  
5 that you know that CEC is chimed in on the delay of  
6 schools reopening. We have not yet chimed in on the  
7 you know, sort of time table that we are using right  
8 now; however, I support the Resolution. As an  
9 individual Chair Treyger and I'm really encouraged  
10 that we're taking the time to go through this. You  
11 know, this is heavy duty work in terms of community  
12 involvement on what we should do next. So many of  
13 the panelists have spoken with emotion and with  
14 eloquence and with data on what we should be talking  
15 about right now. And I think the most important  
16 thing I want to make sure I mention is to echo some  
17 of the concerns that we have with respect to the  
18 conditions of our buildings, specifically in District  
19 3 where Martin Luther King building exists. I  
20 tweeted a little bit ago Chair Treyger about the work  
21 CEC3 has done on that building and I would love it if  
22 we can participate in next steps on that.

24 And to that end, I also want to remark that one  
25 of the things that I think we should be talking about

1  
2 and you guys should be pressing for is the compliance  
3 with something called Chancellor's Regulations 414,  
4 which mandates that the parent leader of a school be  
5 on the safety team.

6 Now, it is my understanding that really my theory  
7 that the DOE -

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

9 KIM WATKINS: Thank you. One second. That the  
10 DOE has been able to get around involving parents and  
11 the walk throughs by calling them something  
12 different, right but we need to reinstitute our  
13 safety teams and so that we can begin to rebuild  
14 trust without the documents being public necessarily  
15 or maybe, we don't really know. The parents really  
16 should be involved in those discussions.

17 Thank you.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and next, we will  
19 hear from Jessica Kim.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

21 JESSICA KIM: Hi, good afternoon everyone. My  
22 name is Jessica Kim and I am a high school science  
23 teacher in Manhattan. Thank you very much for this  
24 opportunity for me to give my testimony.

1  
2       So, just to give an idea of what it's like to be  
3 a teacher trying to plan this and trying to like you  
4 know, figure out what it is that we are doing, it's  
5 pretty much, we don't have a school calendar number  
6 one. I don't really know like who is in my class.  
7 Basically, it is the understanding that I know of and  
8 this is a confusion between the DOE and the UFT. We  
9 don't really know what our responsibilities are.

10       So, we're pretty much, we're in-school staff,  
11 including myself, we are expected to do remote  
12 teaching, monitor the kids in front of us in class,  
13 also do the blended learning online, offline, on our  
14 own.

15       So, let me tell you how ridiculous this is. It's  
16 ridiculous because I have nine kids in front of me  
17 but I'm talking to my computer while policing the  
18 mask compliance in my classroom. And we all heard  
19 about the ventilation and the building conditions for  
20 New York City schools. Most of them are old and  
21 terrible. Let's be honest, when was the last time we  
22 had you know, new construction in any of these  
23 schools?

24       So, with that and the fear of I have to be  
25 careful and watch the safety of students, I now also

1  
2 have to be worried about my safety, my staffs safety  
3 and this is just even before going into the building  
4 and we're going to the building next week for staff.

5 Just to talk about what it was like pre-pandemic;  
6 our school windows were many classrooms. They do not  
7 stay open on their own. Like, we would have to prop  
8 them with text books, stacked text books or stack  
9 them with whatever Knick knacks just laying around in  
10 our classroom to make them stay open. I mean, we had  
11 AC issues in our school and we are told that when we  
12 approach school on the 8<sup>th</sup> and so forth, we are not  
13 allowed to turn on the fans or the AC's.

14 So, you have sweltering heat with all these  
15 bodies in the classroom and it's still September, it  
16 is still hot. Now we have masks and somehow, we are  
17 all supposed to understand each other and stay six  
18 feet apart.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

20 JESSICA KIM: Sorry. I just don't think that  
21 reopening is possible at this point.

22 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I want to thank you and you  
23 just brought me back to my teaching days. I know all  
24 about those windows that don't stay open and I - you  
25 are a high school teacher, is that correct?

1  
2 JESSICA KIM: Yes, correct.

3 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And I am hearing from some  
4 high schools and I want to hear from you, are  
5 students going to be moving around in different  
6 classes or are they staying in one class throughout  
7 the day in your school?

8 JESSICA KIM: So, to my understanding the most  
9 recent staff meetings had iPads in my schools. It's  
10 the teachers actually moving around to different  
11 classrooms.

12 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Okay, okay. So, they are  
13 going to try to keep student in the same class  
14 throughout the day, because I'm hearing - how many  
15 total kids do you have in your building?

16 JESSICA KIM: We have about approximately 436  
17 students and we share the building with another  
18 school.

19 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I think that's why because  
20 some of the schools I'm hearing from that are going  
21 to have kids move around are schools that have over  
22 three, four, thousand students in them.

23 So, you have relatively a smaller school but  
24 still, a sizable number as well.

1  
2 JESSICA KIM: I mean, we haven't even talked  
3 about entry, exit protocol. Like, that's not even an  
4 issue that's been raised. How do we make sure the  
5 kids you know, distance themselves on the stairwell.  
6 How do they walk around the hallways?

7 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Absolutely and also, quick  
8 question. This is something that I have a concern  
9 with that we didn't have a chance to ask the  
10 Administration today but I'm going to still press  
11 ahead. I used to teach many, you know, multilingual  
12 learners in my classes and I remember when I was  
13 asked to return from them the learning survey's. It  
14 would always be a challenge because many families  
15 understand that we will be nervous to return  
16 documents back over to the government and this was  
17 before the Trump Administration. Now, it is  
18 extremely difficult and challenging right now.

19 So, the concern that I have is with the city's  
20 contact tracing program. Can you just imagine a  
21 stranger coming into the building looking to speak  
22 with our kids, particularly our vulnerable kids, our  
23 immigrant students saying come here, I have to ask  
24 you a bunch of questions and you have to answer them.



1  
2 Can you speak about that concern that I have? Do  
3 you feel that that's a valid concern because I know  
4 that my kids would be certainly nervous and anxious  
5 about that.

6 JESSICA KIM: Absolutely. I mean, this also is  
7 taking into account that well, at least in my school,  
8 I know for a fact there is going to be students in  
9 like high service, high need, you know, students.  
10 So, they might need an interpreter, they might need a  
11 para. All of those things are already like consented  
12 to. But I'm not confident that a lot of the students  
13 or even their families are going to be okay with that  
14 to be honest with you. And then to tell them, if you  
15 don't comply with this contact tracing, they are now  
16 full remote. You can't come into the building  
17 anymore. No more services for you, you are on your  
18 own.

19 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: That's been the theme this  
20 entire time from city Administration to schools, you  
21 are on your own and I just want to tell you, I know  
22 this might not mean much but I appreciate you and I  
23 appreciate all of your colleagues who have been  
24 working nonstop. You know, people keep referring to  
25 school buildings being closed. The work that you are

1  
2 doing has probably been exponentially increased, in  
3 terms of trying to maintain connections with your  
4 students and your school families and you are  
5 speaking up for more than just your profession. You  
6 are speaking up for every single kid in your class,  
7 in your school community and everyone of your  
8 colleagues. School food workers, social workers,  
9 counselors, aids, you name it.

10 So, I just, I appreciate you. I will continue to  
11 have your back and continue to open mechanical on  
12 behalf of your safety and the wellbeing of your  
13 colleagues and of your students.

14 So, I just want to say thank you so much.

15 JESSICA KIM: Thank you for listening.

16 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Sure.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And that concludes this  
18 panels testimony. We will now move on to the next  
19 panel. The next panel is Jenny Low, Richard Aguirre,  
20 Chauncy Young, and Rachel Paguaga. We will first  
21 hear from Jenny Low.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, we are going to move to  
24 Richard and we can come back to Jenny at the end.  
25 Richard?

1  
2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

3 RICHARD AGUIRRE: Thank you. Can you hear me?

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, go ahead.

5 RICHARD AGUIRRE: Yes, thank you before panel  
6 with the great work that you guys are doing. For the  
7 consideration of giving people and their families the  
8 opportunity to be able to speak up. I do have one  
9 thing that has really bothered me. It's about the  
10 accountability of SCA throughout the entire process.  
11 I cannot, I cannot believe that we are not holding  
12 them accountable for what is going on right now. The  
13 problem that COVID did surge on was that there was a  
14 failure of mechanical systems and the mechanical  
15 systems in the schools have not failed just yesterday  
16 or three months ago. It has been an ongoing issue  
17 for so many years. SCA and DOE together should be  
18 accountable for this. I am part of a task force of  
19 my local school and I thank my school because they  
20 give me the opportunity to be able to see what is  
21 going on and not only that, I get the reports for so  
22 many other schools from New York City with a systems.  
23 This is back in 2018-2019 report, with so many  
24 systems being defective and broken.

1  
2 I questioned this and I think that the Council  
3 has the power and authority to be able to question  
4 SCA for this failure.

5 We pay enough money through our taxes. We are  
6 asked to have to send our children to be able to have  
7 this kind of experience. I am part of Citywide  
8 Council for High Schools. I am one of the members  
9 there and I have raised this voice, raised this  
10 concern to so many other venues to no answer. SCA  
11 must be able to give us a full report and somebody  
12 should be able to be accountable for what is going on  
13 right now with all the schools, the mechanical  
14 systems and ventilation.

15 So, once again, thank you for all your work and  
16 thank you to all the parents and all the parent  
17 leaders who are here together.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and next we will  
19 Jenny Low who we have back on the line.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

21 JENNY LOW: Thank you. Thank you for allowing me  
22 to testify at this hearing. I am Jenny Low, a proud  
23 product of New York City's public school system and a  
24 parent whose child graduated from public schools a  
25

1  
2 year ago. I am also a candidate for City Council in  
3 District 1.

4 How to reopen school has been an incredibly  
5 difficult and complex decision for city leaders. I'm  
6 glad the Mayor and the Department of Education are  
7 listening to our concerns and have delayed in-person  
8 learning to September 21<sup>st</sup>. This is a relief for  
9 families and teachers who are concerned about the  
10 lack of a clear reopening plan and have been  
11 operating in the dark so far.

12 We know that the consequences of any decision  
13 about school will fall hardest on the most vulnerable  
14 among us. Including immigrant populations and  
15 communities of color that have been  
16 disproportionately impacted by the coronavirus  
17 pandemic. These communities are more likely to be  
18 essential workers who are at higher risk of  
19 infection. Immigrant families like mine often living  
20 in multigenerational homes hosting a higher risk for  
21 our senior population.

22 While delaying in-person instruction is a good  
23 first step, there is a lot more work to do to ensure  
24 the health and safety of all students, teachers, and  
25 staff this fall. The DOE needs to release clear

1  
2 plans and clear safety protocol for busing and  
3 communicating the plan to all bus drivers. All  
4 schools must be thoroughly inspected to ensure that  
5 the right ventilating system, windows, fans, and  
6 other safety measures are in place and DOE needs to  
7 make masks mandatory in all classrooms.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

9 JENNY LOW: Just a couple more minutes. Clear,  
10 once a month testing for virus to ensure that the  
11 outbreak can be contained. There is far too much  
12 risk at the nations largest school system that makes  
13 such a monumental decision without being fully  
14 prepared. This risk is higher especially for  
15 immigrants and community of color who have already  
16 suffered so much. The city needs to take these steps  
17 and fully communicate its plans to educate the  
18 students and family.

19 Thank you very much.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Jenny. Next, we  
21 will hear from Chancy.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

23 CHANCY YOUNG: Good afternoon Council Members,  
24 parents, students, school staff, and community  
25 members. I am speaking today on behalf of New

1  
2 Settlement Parent Action Committee, a parent  
3 organization that has been fighting to address  
4 education inequities for over 20 years in District 9  
5 and the Bronx and a member organization of the  
6 schools coalition and the New York City Coalition for  
7 Educational Justice.

8 First, let me state that our members feel that  
9 in-person education is superior to remote education  
10 but plans provided by the DOE and the city are  
11 inadequate to address the health concerns. And until  
12 these are addressed, in-person education is going to  
13 put our students, school staff and families  
14 needlessly at risk.

15 There are too many unanswered questions. It is  
16 not only about the safety and cleanliness of school  
17 buildings and classrooms but how students are getting  
18 to school. For students taking public  
19 transportation, the MTA buses, and trains, how can we  
20 ensure safety? For students being bused by the DOE,  
21 logistics of busing, safety plans and procedures are  
22 not clear. In terms of childcare centers for  
23 families that need care for blended learning  
24 students, there is no plan to address the demand.  
25 Unfortunately, the New York City public education

1  
2 system has been inequitable for decades and the  
3 crisis has only highlighted these existing  
4 inequities.

5 For example, I invite you to visit public school  
6 126 in District 9, a school with basement classrooms.  
7 A dangerous combined auditorium, gym, and cafeteria.  
8 126 has outdoor roof top play area that should be the  
9 highlight for the school but is instead dangerous and  
10 unusable. The community has demanded that the city  
11 repair this space for decades. It would be ideal for  
12 outdoor learning but instead, we can't use it. There  
13 are many schools like 126. We must center and engage  
14 our most impacted students and families such as  
15 multi-language learners, families with limited  
16 literacy, families with disabilities, IEP's, and  
17 students in temporary housing. We must invest in  
18 equitable remote learning to make sure that every  
19 student has a device and they can be quickly replaced  
20 and to make sure that everyone has internet for  
21 public schools.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

23 CHAUNCY YOUNG: Could I say this, the last  
24 statement. We need to address the enormous cuts for  
25 New York City schools that have received during this



1  
2 historic health crisis. We need to delay reopening  
3 until we fully fund our schools and have equitable,  
4 safe prioritized phase plan.

5 We need to fully fund New York City schools. We  
6 need a millionaires tax now. Thank you.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and next, we will  
8 hear from Rachel.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

10 RACHEL PAGUAGA: Good afternoon all. My name is  
11 Rachel Paguaga and I am testifying as a first grade  
12 teacher in Carrol Gardens as well as alumna of PS  
13 222 and Marine Park Junior High School, both in  
14 Council District 46 as well as Madison High School in  
15 Council District 48.

16 First, I'd like to thank Chairperson Treyger for  
17 bringing this Resolution to the City Council and to  
18 the City Council members who sponsored the  
19 Resolution.

20 When I began writing this testimony, the UFT was  
21 on the brink of voting for a strike authorization.  
22 As they made clear, things have rapidly changed over  
23 the course of this week but one thing remains, it is  
24 still unsafe for any of our school communities to  
25 return to their buildings. To say that Mayor Bill de

1  
2 Blasio and Chancellor Richard Carranza have dropped  
3 the ball during their back to school preparations  
4 would be a gross mis understatement. Their lack of  
5 clear communication with all families and DOE  
6 employees has been absolutely abhorrent. I have  
7 received seven emails from Chancellor Carranza since  
8 the end of the school year.

9       The amount of [INAUDIBLE 4:13:43] are part of  
10 these individuals is absolutely repugnant. Every day  
11 I find myself trying to make sense of any of the  
12 information and outright lies that are being  
13 presented to us. From survey data to the claim that  
14 teachers have received any type of training to the  
15 amount of COVID supplies purchased for the entire  
16 school system. It's never made sense; it will never  
17 make sense and I'm entirely unsure as to who this  
18 plan is designed for other than themselves. It is  
19 entirely clear that the primary goal is to declare  
20 the reopening of nation's largest school district,  
21 the victory and use it as a talking point for their  
22 future political process.

23       This ten day extension is merely bread crumbs  
24 intended to appease many unions that have said that  
25 it unsafe to return to school buildings.

1  
2 As an Italian American, I've had a lot of bread  
3 crumbs in my day and I can confidently say these are  
4 stale. In two weeks', time we will all have a sense  
5 of collective déjà vu. Ten more days of preparations  
6 does not a safe reopening plan make. Those  
7 responsible for reopening plans are merely arranging  
8 death chairs in the titanic as the band provides a  
9 score for their demise.

10 Teachers, principals, custodians, custodial  
11 engineers, school aids, cafeteria workers, nurses,  
12 and parents have all called for a delay in school  
13 reopening.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

15 RACHEL PAGUAGA: Can I just - one more sentence.  
16 All of us cannot be wrong.

17 Thank you for your time.

18 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I want to thank the  
19 extraordinary teacher. I will not forget that bread  
20 crumb connection as well and they are definitely  
21 stale and thank you for your service. I truly  
22 appreciate you and we're going to continue to speak  
23 up and hold them accountable.

24 So, I just want to thank you for your service.  
25

1  
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: That concludes the testimony  
3 for this panel. We will now move on to the next.  
4 The next panel is Jazmin del Valle, Rob Roszkowski,  
5 MNM, and Nelson Mar. We will first hear from Jazmin.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

7 JAZMIN DEL VALLE: Yes, hi, I am the IEP member  
8 for CEC6. I am one of the parents for PSP and having  
9 a child with special needs myself, I've seen the  
10 principals guide handbook and there is no mention of  
11 any type of guidelines for kids with IEP's in  
12 District 75.

13 I cannot send my child to an unsafe environment,  
14 not knowing how his services for PT, OT, speech  
15 therapist is going to be done. When even the  
16 principals themselves have no idea. There is no  
17 conversation for this day of how this is going to be  
18 done. When yet, school is nearly around the corner,  
19 and it still has not started.

20 I don't see how I could send other family members  
21 to an unsafe environment and knowing that my son,  
22 realistically would be more beneficial out of school,  
23 I cannot send him.

24 And I also want to add that you know, we're going  
25 to show that our schools are such dividing, like

1  
2 where schools are more capable and able versus  
3 schools with kids with low income and kids of color.  
4 And that's what I wanted to say. Thank you.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and next, we will  
6 hear from Rob Roszkowski.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

8 ROB ROSZKOWSKI: Can you hear me now?

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, go ahead.

10 ROB ROSZKOWSKI: Alright, sorry, the mic wasn't  
11 going. Good afternoon everyone, my name is Robert  
12 Roszkowski. I am a teacher in District 75, a parent  
13 of a Rising 12<sup>th</sup> grader with an IEP and a member of  
14 both the UFT Delegate Assembly and my schools BRTT.  
15 In respect of everyone's time, I will cut right to  
16 the chase. I am aware that District 75 protocols and  
17 specifics are still in discussion and the DOE were  
18 unfortunately not elected to attend today.

19 Any opening plan needs clearly defined District  
20 75 protocols and nothing specific to that population  
21 has been addressed. One of the health protocols  
22 released by the DOE on July 30<sup>th</sup> for blended learning  
23 outlined that there is one confirmed case of COVID-  
24 19. Only that class is to close.

1  
2 Two confirmed cases will close the school  
3 community. While there maybe a measured safeguard  
4 for general education classes, this does not work in  
5 the District 75 model. To keep our safe, our most  
6 vulnerable population with the most desperate needs  
7 of service, of minimal consideration if blended has  
8 to occur must be that the rule for one case closes a  
9 class. Not a class in District 75 but is amended to  
10 close the entire site.

11 Considering the following briefly, 95 percent of  
12 all District 75 students are bused to school and the  
13 buses are not broken down by classes or school  
14 generated cohorts. Students are on the buses for up  
15 to two hours. The majority of students receive  
16 related services and these providers share more than  
17 the one class and some cases even the entire site. A  
18 significant portion of the students require direct  
19 supervision, they cannot be left home alone, so they  
20 go to after school programs where they will be mixing  
21 in different cohorts.

22 Most District 75 students cannot wear a mask and  
23 meal times and hands on self-care instructional for  
24 many 1214 and 611 students. Again, these and  
25 numerous other reasons, this is why blended learning

1  
2 for the rule one case closes the class, additionally  
3 five must be amended to close. One case closes the  
4 entire site.

5 As Council Member Vallone said earlier, equity is  
6 not always equal. The mathematics of the safety  
7 equation is one such example.

8 Thank you.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will  
10 hear from MNM.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

12 MRM: Yes, hello, can you hear me?

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes.

14 MRM: Alright, I'm an ELA teacher at a District  
15 transfer school. Earlier we were told that the \$1  
16 billion cut to education was in order to avoid having  
17 the Governor control the city. However, I still  
18 would like to acknowledge that a choice was made to  
19 cut the education budget and I think we need to make  
20 sure that we understand that is the reason we are now  
21 in the cluster fund that we have.

22 So, we keep touting equity and we definitely need  
23 to acknowledge the system since there is a lot of  
24 questions that I have.

1  
2 We need to question why the dozens of  
3 billionaires that New York City have, have not been  
4 taxed properly in order to support fully funding our  
5 education. This would be a great help but yet,  
6 nothing has been said about that.

7 In regards to remote learning, it hasn't really  
8 received I feel enough or significant attention in  
9 terms of its development. Apparently, teachers have  
10 been trained on remote learning. I am a teacher, I  
11 have not received an email, a text message, snail  
12 mail or courier pigeon offering me any such training.

13 So, parents have no idea what remote learning is  
14 going to look like, guess what? Teachers don't  
15 either.

16 In addition to these questions around equity, I  
17 want to know how are students getting free or low  
18 cost wi-fi or broadband, how are staff going to get  
19 that because some staff cannot afford that.

20 How will devices for those students who need it  
21 be distributed because 200,000 citywide does not seem  
22 to be adequate. What will be the process for tech  
23 support when these devices invariably fail or glitch?

24 These REC centers, I'm very concerned about that  
25 because right now it doesn't seem that we have enough



1  
2 available especially as more and more parents are  
3 opting for either full remote or blended and if they  
4 do go full remote, and it's my understanding is that  
5 they don't qualify for these centers. How will they  
6 be staffed. Who will be vetting these people that  
7 are staffing these REC centers. Will there be back  
8 up.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

10 MRM: I'm just going to finish my last point.  
11 There are too many deal breakers and I won't die for  
12 DOE and I will not ask my students to die for DOE  
13 either. Thank you.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and next, we will  
15 hear from Nelson Mar.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

17 NELSON MAR: Hi, good afternoon. I'd like to  
18 request if I could speak a little bit later. I'm in  
19 a place where I really can't talk right now.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, we can move you to a  
21 later panel. So, Chair, do you have any questions  
22 for this panel?

23 NELSON MAR: Thank you.  
24  
25

1  
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, we will move onto the  
3 next panel. The next panel is Nancy Bedard, Robin  
4 Menikoff and Ted Leather. We will start with Nancy.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

6 NANCY BEDARD: Good afternoon. Thank you very  
7 much for the opportunity to speak today. My name is  
8 Nancy Bedard, I am an attorney with Brooklyn Legal  
9 Services. I am providing testimony for Legal  
10 Services New York City, which is a – we represent  
11 low-income communities throughout New York City, in  
12 litigation advocacy, education outreach. I am here  
13 to talk about the social and emotional wellbeing of  
14 the students when the school reopens safely. We are  
15 very concerned and we'd like to give recommendations  
16 on what discipline will look like in the 2020-2021  
17 school year.

18 I'm sorry, we are asking for a moratorium on  
19 suspensions. We also want rethinking of the police  
20 presence in schools and the role of school safety  
21 officers in order to adopt a healing centered  
22 culturally sensitive approach to learning. To reduce  
23 the trauma and the alienation brought on by the  
24 pandemic and the continued police violence and  
25 systemic oppression against people of color. On

1  
2 that, we ask for withdrawal of pending suspensions  
3 for students and that no new suspensions be done  
4 either remotely or in person. The stigmatization and  
5 isolation of suspended students who the vast majority  
6 have disabilities and our students of color have  
7 suffered adverse trauma and otherwise feel  
8 marginalize and that will serve no purpose to  
9 discipline them.

10 We do understand that there are many concerns  
11 about how a potential breach of social distancing  
12 protocols and the quickly changing expectations and  
13 rules of conduct in light of the pandemic will be  
14 dealt with and how this might further impact  
15 students. We ask that to the maximum extent  
16 possible, the DOE refrain from posing punitive  
17 disciplinary measures in virtual learning and in any  
18 school -

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

20 NANCY BEDARD: Thank you so much for your time.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. I appreciate your  
22 testimony and next, we will hear from Robin. If we  
23 can unmute Robin.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.  
25

1  
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, we can come back to  
3 Robin. Let's unmute Ted Leather.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

5 TED LEATHER: And I represent Manhattan on the  
6 citywide council on high schools. The CCHS believes  
7 the most prudent course of action is to start the  
8 school year 100 percent remote.

9 We understand what is compromised with online  
10 education but the danger going back to buildings  
11 cannot be dismissed for students, teachers,  
12 Administrators, and families who may be exposed to  
13 COVID-19. Even if all schools are properly  
14 ventilated, COVID may be transmitted during the  
15 commute to and from school. It will take a lifetime  
16 to ensure that all schools are ventilated and cost  
17 well north of a billion dollars.

18 Absent a vaccine, the risks are overwhelming.  
19 So, we advocate instead effective online teaching be  
20 developed as opposed to this fragmented piecemeal  
21 effort to please every constituency.

22 Yes, the DOE does many things and for the most  
23 part, they do them perfunctorily. Public health has  
24 to take priority over everything. There is no  
25 education if lives are at risk and we have three

1  
2 steps or solutions. One, parents and students want  
3 to know now what they can do to quote, have school.  
4 They want people to help them understand the iPad.  
5 How to log in, who their teachers are. Will they  
6 need to be on the computer every hour of the school  
7 day and so on.

8 Two, spend the next two weeks contacting students  
9 and families. Get them info on technology. Make  
10 sure they know how to use the iPad. Every teacher  
11 should contact their students. Let them know what  
12 will be happening at the beginning of the year. And  
13 finally, FACE is an organization within the DOE. Use  
14 them to begin this imperative reach out to the  
15 115,000 students.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony.  
17 Is Robin still on the line? Can me unmute Robin  
18 Menikoff?

19 ROBIN MENIKOFF: Can you hear me?

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, please go ahead.

21 ROBIN MENIKOFF: Okay.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

23 ROBIN MENIKOFF: My name is Robin Menikoff, I'm  
24 with the COVID-19 Accountability Working group. Some  
25 of you know Jill Klufferman[SP?] the Director of our

1  
2 group. Which is comprised of teachers, teaching  
3 assistants, parents, community leaders, scientists,  
4 public health positions and experts, several of whom  
5 are 911 veterans. Have we learned nothing from 911?  
6 Students, teachers, and staff were ordered to return  
7 to schools contaminated with World Trade Center smoke  
8 and dust, ignoring all warnings including independent  
9 sampling data and expert advice.

10 The city denied the dangers instead of addressing  
11 the environmental health risks. Is the city going to  
12 follow the 911 playbook in schools now? It looks  
13 like it. The rushed assessments and stop gap  
14 measures recommended by the city are flawed and  
15 inadequate and will put students, teachers, staff,  
16 and those they come into contact with at risk for  
17 infection.

18 Well respected industrial hygienist and  
19 ventilation expert Monona Rossol[SP?] notes, the  
20 issues are that there are many schools that do not  
21 have recirculating ventilation systems and rely on  
22 air conditions and unit ventilators, aka univents.  
23 Air conditioners usually provide no fresh air and  
24 their filters are not capable of capturing the COVID  
25 droplets or aerosols when they operate. If an

1  
2 infectious individual is in such a room, the aerosol  
3 they leave behind will remain for many hours and have  
4 the potential to infect others.

5       The same issues are seen with the univents.  
6 While they can bring in fresh if they are installed  
7 where there are outside wall or window penetrations,  
8 many only recirculate room air. Even if the unit  
9 ventilator is properly connected to the outside and  
10 provides a mixture of fresh and room air. The  
11 filters cannot capture the COVID droplets or aerosol.  
12 This means that only the actual amount of fresh air  
13 is used full in replacing air that potentially  
14 carries the COVID aerosol.

15       This little replacement leaves the contaminated  
16 air in the room for hours after an infectious person  
17 has been in the space. The room served by air  
18 conditioners and or unit ventilators cannot be made  
19 safe without major changes and additional equipment  
20 such as HEPA filters or designing and installing  
21 delusion exhaust systems.

22       The recirculating systems also maybe problematic.  
23 Even if they are upgraded and repaired to meet the  
24 standards of 62.1 2019 the standard doesn't address  
25 the COVID needs.

1  
2 I'm going to skip ahead because I'm running out  
3 of time. With proposed the task force of independent  
4 experts and stakeholders be convened to set standards  
5 for school inspections and create a process for  
6 independent review with inspection. We will be  
7 submitting more documents -

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Please, if you wanted to wrap  
10 up your thought.

11 ROBIN MENIKOFF: Thanks. All I was saying is  
12 that we will be submitting further documents that  
13 will clarify some of this and provide more  
14 information.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and that concludes  
16 the testimony for this panel. The next panel will be  
17 Ilona Nanay, Naomi Pena, Verogie Hena Jones, and  
18 Ayishah Irvin. We will start with Ilona.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

20 ILONA NANAY: Hi.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Hold on one moment, you were  
22 remuted. Give us one moment. There we go, go ahead.

23 ILONA NANAY: Can you hear me?

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes.  
25



1  
2 ILONA NANAY: Hi, my name is Ilona Nanay. I am a  
3 teacher and a chapter leader at Mott Hall V, a 6<sup>th</sup>  
4 through 12<sup>th</sup> school in District 12 in Bronx. I am  
5 also a member of MORE UFT on who has been elevating a  
6 health justice agenda since schools closed in March.

7 While I support the Resolution to delay the start  
8 of in-person schooling, I believe the Resolution does  
9 not go far enough to address the many health, safety,  
10 and equity concerns that so many have voiced here  
11 today. On August 27<sup>th</sup>, more than 200 community  
12 members showed up for a Bronx Town Hall hosted by  
13 more UFT.

14 Parents shared their concerns. One topic of  
15 conversation was the chemicals used in cleaning  
16 products, specifically the chemicals that would be  
17 sprayed to disinfect classrooms. Would their children  
18 with asthma be breathing in toxic chemicals? Other  
19 parents wondered how the DOE could be prepared to  
20 educate their children safely this year when the  
21 plans are coming out so late. Others voiced concerns  
22 about how one to three days of in-person instruction  
23 does not solve their childcare problems.

24 As of today, there is still no viable childcare  
25 plan offered by the city for parents and teachers who

1  
2 need coverage for the gap between when teachers  
3 return to the school on the 8<sup>th</sup> and students on the  
4 21<sup>st</sup>.

5 In addition, teachers outright question the DOE's  
6 ability to provide PPE in adequate quantities given  
7 the many resources we lack on a consistent basis due  
8 to inadequate funding of our public schools. My  
9 school for example is still owed close to \$1 million  
10 in foundation aid and lost close to \$1 million in the  
11 first wave of budget cuts. Similarly, teachers  
12 wondered how ventilation systems of the turn of the  
13 century buildings could suddenly be deemed safe over  
14 the course of a few summer months. When we're used  
15 to not having enough budget space, ventilation,  
16 supplies, it's really difficult to trust that now  
17 suddenly we'll have all of these things in abundance.

18 District 12 is often called the heart of the  
19 Bronx but we do not have confidence in this plan  
20 because the people who make up that heart, were not  
21 consulted in creating it.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

23 ILONA NANAY: Can I finish my statement, just one  
24 point.

25 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Go ahead, please wrap up.

1  
2 ILONA NANAY: Thank you. I have yet to see the  
3 building reports that confirm the safety of the  
4 building even though we're asking teachers to report  
5 on September 8<sup>th</sup>. I also want to point out that the  
6 COVID-19 positive infection rates in zip codes that  
7 encompass District 12 are above the 3 percent rate  
8 that the Mayor and UFT President Mulgrew have used to  
9 bolster this plan.

10 Look, this agreement in honestly this Resolution  
11 does not address the chronic underfunding of our  
12 school system. A problem that is only going to be  
13 magnified within pending austerity measures.  
14 Measures that could be offset by taxing our states  
15 millionaires, many of whom live here in NYC. We  
16 request answers and solution and we demand a return  
17 to the drawing board that includes the voices of  
18 students, communities and teachers because only then  
19 can we confidently say that this is the "most robust  
20 safety plan in place for students, families, and  
21 educators."

22 Thank you.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and next we will  
24 hear from Naomi Pena.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

1  
2           NAOMI PENA: Hello and good afternoon. My name  
3 is Naomi Pena and I am proud District 1 parent of  
4 four children and a parent leader in the public  
5 school system.

6           I want to thank City Council Member Treyger and  
7 Education Committee for hosting this public hearing  
8 about our reopening of our schools. I want to first  
9 acknowledge how incredibly sad it is that this  
10 hearing even has to take place. Over the course of  
11 the last two months, the parents, and guardians to  
12 1.1 million children have been living in constant  
13 despair and agony over what to do with their  
14 children. Should they keep them home or send them  
15 in. It's been the constant point of discussion  
16 amongst every parent in stores, private settings,  
17 amongst our communities like small business owners to  
18 the playgrounds, to large group texts amongst our  
19 parents in social distancing days.

20           Now, what I'm finding is that overwhelmingly the  
21 communities of color are not sending their children  
22 back to school. Why? Because we have lived  
23 experience with this virus. We know someone that has  
24 died or fallen incredibly sick to this virus.

1  
2 We know that our children can be asymptomatic  
3 carriers thus spreading it amongst their communities  
4 like schools and homes. I, myself have opted my kids  
5 to keep them home. Not because I wanted to, because  
6 they refused to go back. When this demand is coming  
7 from a middle schooler and elementary school aged  
8 children, parents and administrators need to step  
9 back and ask why.

10 My children do not feel comfortable going back  
11 because they flat out said, how would they be able to  
12 stay safe if they barely had soap and paper towels in  
13 pre-COVID times. They also told me they didn't want  
14 to get myself or a teacher sick. Our children are  
15 living with lived experience and trauma and this will  
16 have ripple effects for this generation for years to  
17 come. I want to make something incredibly clear here  
18 today. The DOE has been gaslighting parents about  
19 the reopening. The Mayor has been banking this  
20 reopening based on federal funding that has never  
21 arrived or state borrowing power that is highly  
22 unlikely.

23 The Chancellor admitted that at the financial  
24 fact that if they are required to make additional  
25

1  
2 cuts, our schools cannot physically open. So, why  
3 have we been wasting two months to reopen?

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

5 NAOMI PENA: Can I finish my one line? Why have  
6 we been focusing on not making remote, experienced,  
7 more robust and engaging? Lastly, for the elected  
8 officials on this call, I hope you are starting to  
9 realize how incredibly problematic it is to have one  
10 person in charge of our school system. Having one  
11 person dictating a process that refuses to listen to  
12 anyone is exactly mayoral control doesn't work.

13 I refuse to put my children and my family in a  
14 death trap because the Mayor refuses to allow his  
15 absolute power to corrupt him absolutely.

16 Thank you.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and next we will  
18 hear from Ayishah Irvin.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Staring time.

20 AYISHAH IRVIN: Hello, my name is Ayishah Irvin,  
21 mother of three children, two in high school, one in  
22 elementary in District 5. My son is so eager to go  
23 back to school. Unfortunately, with this situation,  
24 I cannot allow it. My daughters, both in high  
25 school, one is just starting high school. There is

1  
2 no way that I can do that when yesterday we just  
3 found out with our parent coordinator and that staff  
4 going back on Monday. Already the school had to be  
5 shut down because two people tested positive for  
6 COVID and that's without the students coming.

7       So, how can I in good faith send my two  
8 daughters, one who has acute seizures into a building  
9 that holds 1,100 people there hoping that everything  
10 will be okay. My son, who is asthmatic, severely  
11 asthmatic, how can I send him into his building  
12 hoping everything will be okay. District 5, we are  
13 the majority Black and Brown students and we are  
14 expected to be sure that everything will be fine.  
15 That we already have a shortage of PPE's and they are  
16 saying you can reup every 30 days. I don't have  
17 faith in that when I know that the supply that they  
18 have is low to begin with. I can't trust that for my  
19 children. Even one child getting sick is not okay.  
20 So, them to say that kids are lower to get sick or  
21 spread it, what if one of my children caught it and  
22 gave it to my 78 year old mother? Like, there is no  
23 amount of I'm sorry is something happened to one of  
24 my children or my mom.

1  
2 Like, I've been in this system for 25 years. I  
3 started as a teacher and now, I'm a parent leader,  
4 been in seat for ten years and to have to explain to  
5 any parent that I'm a PTA president, a CEC member, to  
6 have to explain to them, I am sorry but -

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

8 AYISHAH IRVIN: Everything you said in front of  
9 it. So, there is no way we can allow this. Someone  
10 has to hold the Mayor, the Chancellor, even the  
11 Governor accountable for this.

12 I'm hoping that City Council will be the one to  
13 do it. Thank you.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and next, we will  
15 hear from Faraji Hannah-Jones.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

17 FARAJI HANNAH-JONES: Hi everyone. Faraji  
18 Hannah-Jones. A proud public school parent and proud  
19 African American descent citizen but ultimately, I am  
20 a proud national - my nationality being an American.  
21 I am a proud American. I am proud to be here in New  
22 York with you.

23 I would like to share a quick history lesson for  
24 those about our public school education. It was  
25 something that was written in the 1619 project that



1  
2 my wife had done recently, so hopefully you all read  
3 it. It says that the public – so I want everyone to  
4 know that our public education system is very sacred.  
5 It didn't exist in the south before reconstruction.  
6 The White Elite sent their children to private school  
7 [LOST AUDIO 4:40:49].

8 So, Black legislatures successfully pushed for a  
9 universal state funded system of schools, not just  
10 for their own children but for White children to. I  
11 want you to keep that in mind.

12 So, we're not in normal times nor will we ever  
13 be. As long as decisions that are being made within  
14 our city is with under the foundation of being the  
15 most segregated city school district, of the city  
16 school district in the country.

17 COVID has exposed what we already know within the  
18 city and its predicted its impact on our Black and  
19 Brown communities and its children. Racism and  
20 oppression is alive within our institution of law  
21 enforcement, housing, education, and employment. It  
22 has since been since the pandemic. Advocates have  
23 sounded the alarm to remove these oppressive  
24 obstacles for years and decades and the city has not  
25 used their moral capacity to destroy it, only to –

1  
2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

3 FARAJI HANNAH-JONES: [Dropped audio 4:41:54]. I  
4 would just like to share with everyone that defunding  
5 the police should not lead to criticism and  
6 dismissal. It should spark moral instinct that leads  
7 to the ambition of law enforcements commitment to the  
8 long term investment in liberating the institution of  
9 education that renounces the racist legacy that built  
10 it. So, that should be the root of their reform.

11 Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you very much and I,  
13 the 1619 Project is powerful. I want to thank you  
14 for, your family for sharing that and quite frankly,  
15 I think every single school should be incorporating  
16 that immediately into their curriculum. Quite  
17 frankly, there were things in that important reading  
18 that are in no textbook and that is history and I  
19 truly appreciate amplifying that and I appreciate  
20 your service and your testimony here today.

21 FARAJI HANNAH-JONES: Thank you. One more point.

22 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Sure.

23 FARAJI HANNAH-JONES: I just wanted everyone to  
24 know, I want the Council Members to know, we do have  
25 technology in our grasp. I will urge everyone to go

1  
2 to NYCmesh.net because that technology can be  
3 installed. It easily can be installed and provided  
4 for everyone to have internet access throughout the  
5 city.

6 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you. Thank you so  
7 much, appreciate that.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and that concludes  
9 the testimony for this panel. The next panel will be  
10 Hallie Yee, Shavonne Milliner, racheta Harris, and  
11 Jessamyn Lee. We will first hear from Hallie Yee.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

13 HALLIE YEE: Great, thank you. My name is Hallie  
14 Yee and I am Policy Coordinator at the Coalition for  
15 Asian American Children and Families.

16 Thank you Chair Treyger and Members of the  
17 Committee on Education for giving us the opportunity  
18 to testify.

19 CACF is the nation's only pan Asians children and  
20 families advocacy organization. The APA community  
21 comprises 15 percent of New York City and our  
22 community space high levels of poverty overcrowding  
23 insurance and linguistic isolation but the needs of  
24 our communities are consistently overlooked,  
25 misunderstood and uncounted.

1  
2 For our schools to be safe and prepared to reopen  
3 to students, teachers, administrators, and support  
4 staff, we must think about more than just the 3  
5 percent citywide average transition rate threshold  
6 that the city is focused on.

7 On behalf of our 70 plus organizational members  
8 and partners serving the diverse APA communities  
9 across the city, we ask Council today to hold our  
10 public education system accountable to our  
11 communities needs. First, we demand that the city  
12 provide accurate data collection and disaggregation  
13 of data on infection rates, hospitalizations, and  
14 deaths in the community.

15 In order to best respond to this pandemic and  
16 reopen safely, we have to at least be able to track  
17 race, ethnicity and languages spoken for those who  
18 are tested, so we can appropriately trace and take  
19 care of our families. We are not doing this now and  
20 our communities and our struggles are being raced.

21 Second, we demand that schools in partnership  
22 with the city's health system can ensure that  
23 critical information gets to students and families in  
24 the language they need.

1  
2 It is only recently that Health and Hospitals was  
3 able to translate health outreach documents into the  
4 city's top 11 languages required by local law. Yet,  
5 this was too late and still not enough. Schools must  
6 be prepared to reach and support students and  
7 families who are limited English proficient.

8 And third, we demand that schools address the  
9 mental health needs of students and families  
10 especially those who are at each stage and presenting  
11 who have been targeted during this pandemic. The  
12 school system must be prepared to help our students  
13 who have faced lost, isolation, discriminations,  
14 phobia and more as they return to school and it's  
15 simply not prepared.

16 Our community members are understandably  
17 frightened of sending their children back to school  
18 and a deep mistrust of the city's government is  
19 spreading throughout communities of color.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

21 HALLIE YEE: And immigrant communities. Ensuring  
22 best practices around COVID-19 testing is key to the  
23 city's recovery and it's critical in making it safe  
24 for our children to learn in person and our  
25 communities vitalization efforts. Thank you.

1  
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear  
3 from Shavonne Milliner.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

5 SHAVONNE MILLINER: Good afternoon. I have been  
6 a high school English teacher for the DOE for 15  
7 years and I've never thought of my medical issues as  
8 a privilege; however, now it has become one.

9 This is sad and disheartening. My colleague  
10 should not have to wish that they have an illness, so  
11 that they can teach remote as well. Our major  
12 concerns are as follows:

13 Why does the agreement that was reached to stop a  
14 strike only address testing a small section of our  
15 population and why aren't teachers being tested prior  
16 to being asked to return to their buildings on the  
17 8<sup>th</sup>?

18 We are expected to monitor the students as they  
19 are having lunch in the classroom. How is this lunch  
20 policy safe for students or for teachers? The  
21 children will not have their masks on and the only  
22 guidance that teachers have received thus far is to  
23 stay in the back of the classroom.

24 This is unacceptable when indoor dining is still  
25 not allowed citywide. Some of us will not be in a

1  
2 position to see our at risk family members until  
3 summer, due to the senseless exposure that we are  
4 about to face. We won't have 14 days to quarantine  
5 before we visit.

6 Those of us with the unfortunate privilege of  
7 having illnesses that remove us from our schools,  
8 which are our second homes, will be expected to  
9 reapply for the accommodation in December, a month  
10 with only 17 DOE working days. How are we to be  
11 ensured that our accommodation will be reinstated for  
12 the new year?

13 These concerns have not been answered or even  
14 truly addressed by our city government or our union.  
15 We do not believe that schools should be open in  
16 person or that our lives and the lives of our  
17 families should be put at risk.

18 Will you, the City Council of New York, advocate  
19 for us? Will you stand up and fight the Mayor and be  
20 our voice as tax paying citizens of this city?

21 Thank you.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and we will now  
23 hear from Rasheeda Harris.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.  
25

1  
2 RASHEEDA HARRIS: Thank you. Can you all hear  
3 me? Thank you Chair Treyger and the rest of the  
4 Committee for holding this hearing. My name is  
5 Rasheeda Harris, pronouns are she, her, hers. I am a  
6 parent leader. I live in the Bronx, City Council  
7 District 13. Mark Gjonaj is my Councilman.

8 I have a rising 5<sup>th</sup> grade daughter who attends  
9 school in East Harlem School District 4. I am in  
10 support of Treyger's Resolution to delay the  
11 reopening of schools until it is truly safe. I am  
12 here as a parent in solidarity with the MORE caucus,  
13 Teachers Unite, and New York City School Worker  
14 Solidarity Campaign.

15 These groups are the voices of teachers and  
16 school staff who are begging to be heard. Who want  
17 to return to school but want to return when it is  
18 truly safe. And I just need to mention organizations  
19 on the ground that have tirelessly been doing this  
20 work with parent volunteers, with no break, no  
21 vacation, no sleep. These are PRESS NYC, AQE, CEJ,  
22 Para Action Committee, the Bronx Healing Center,  
23 Schools for Working group, MASA, Dignity in Schools,  
24 just to name a few. I mention these orgs because  
25 they are working with the families. The Black and



1  
2 Brown indigenous people, immigrant families, and  
3 families in poor communities. And these are the  
4 families and the communities that will suffer the  
5 most from this horrible reopening plan.

6 I'm asking that we please fully fund New York  
7 public schools. 31 City Council Members voted yes to  
8 cutting almost \$1 billion from our schools. I know  
9 Treyger you saved Single Shepard, you saved the FSF  
10 cuts, thank you. We can't afford a cut and we need  
11 to expand Single Shepard.

12 We have a \$34 billion education budget in New  
13 York City and we approved to spend \$3 million on the  
14 electrostatic cleaning method, the ghost busters  
15 backpack. I recently heard that there was a recall  
16 on a solution that we were to use for these  
17 electrostatic cleaners. That they were toxic  
18 chemicals found in this solution. And so, now back  
19 to the drawing board. We should all be fighting our  
20 super awesome Governor Cuomo not to take an  
21 additional 20 percent from our education budget and  
22 we should all be fighting Cuomo to fully fund our  
23 schools. New York State has suffered -

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

1  
2 RASHEEDA HARRIS: But we all have the money. New  
3 York State has the money. We have over 120  
4 billionaires in New York State. Please, fully fund  
5 our school and thank you City Council Members for  
6 this opportunity. Fully fund our schools. Black  
7 Lives Matter.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and next we will  
9 hear from Jessamyn Lee.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

11 JESSAMYN LEE: Thank you. Thank you for this  
12 opportunity to speak. I am here as a parent and PTA  
13 President at PS84 in District 14 in Brooklyn. I am  
14 also here as a former DOE educator. I am here as a  
15 member of PRESS NYC. I am here to support the MORE  
16 caucus of UFT and to amplify the call to delay the  
17 reopening of schools until schools are safe.

18 The other thing I am here to do is to acknowledge  
19 Sandra Santos Liscaino[SP?], my daughters teacher.  
20 She is the first DOE educator to have died of COVID  
21 last spring and the DOE has failed to sufficiently  
22 honor its employees who died because of this tragedy.  
23 And I want that into record.

24 Additionally, I am here to advocate for not only  
25 my special education student who is an autistic

1 student in the ASTNS program but all special  
2 education students. I have written to every member  
3 of City Council's Education Committee on this issue.

4 Both with DOE's guidance and NYSETS guidance on  
5 special education have loopholes in them that allow  
6 for the denial of services. That allow for the  
7 limitations of services and it's a clear violation of  
8 federal law. It's a violation of the Idea Act, it's  
9 a violation of the EDA. I am here because I am  
10 concerned for my child's related service providers  
11 and related service providers throughout the city. I  
12 don't know how they are going to do this work.

13 All special education students, 80 percent of  
14 whom are Black and Brown deserve a free and  
15 appropriate public education and this plan and its  
16 blended iteration and its remote iteration fail to  
17 uphold our kids civil right to a free and appropriate  
18 public education and I have written, like I said, to  
19 every City Council Member on this Education Committee  
20 and have gotten silence. I want action. Our kids  
21 deserve better. Our kids deserve access to their  
22 education and this is unconscionable.

23 One last note, the DOE is staffed overwhelmingly  
24 -

1  
2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

3 JESSAMYN LEE: By women. Over 80 percent of the  
4 employees at the DOE are women. They have knowledge,  
5 they have expertise, they have experience, they have  
6 wisdom and they are being ignored by our male Mayor  
7 and our male Chancellor and what we are seeing here  
8 is structural messaging and it needs to stop.

9 Thank you very much.

10 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you very much as well  
11 and if you could actually resend, my apologies, email  
12 to me, because I get a lot of emails these days but  
13 I'd like to see the email that you sent over.

14 JESSAMYN LEE: Absolutely. The guidance from  
15 NYSED is very clear to allow flexibility and duration  
16 and the DOE frankly acted in bad faith last spring  
17 when it came to the remote learning plans they  
18 offered to special education families. They truncated  
19 services, they shortened related service sessions and  
20 the DOE has made absolutely no effort to issue RSA's  
21 or issue any accommodation to adjust for those missed  
22 hours of instruction and service supports.

23 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you for letting us  
24 know. I appreciate that, thank you so much.

25 JESSAMYN LEE: You are welcome, thank you.

1  
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. That concludes  
3 testimony for this panel. We will now go to the  
4 next. The next panel is Anna Meyer, Janine Sopp, B.  
5 Kaiser and Sharmilee Ramudit. We will start with  
6 Anna Meyer.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

8 ANNA MEYER: Hi, my name is Anna Meyer, I teach  
9 9<sup>th</sup> grade social studies in the south Bronx. Thank  
10 you for having me here today. I also want to mention  
11 I am a MORE member. I believe that school buildings  
12 opening now is unsafe, underfunded, and rushed and we  
13 must plan for a remote start.

14 Teachers and students and families lost trust in  
15 the DOE when schools remained opened in March. Even  
16 after there were COVID cases in our schools and  
17 neighborhoods. New York Times estimates that if the  
18 U.S. had begun imposing social distancing measures  
19 one week earlier or schools had closed one week  
20 earlier, 1,500 lives would have been saved in New  
21 York City alone.

22 The plans for hybrid learning don't add up. To  
23 give just one example, students will have limited  
24 time to enter the buildings in the morning. I am  
25 teaching remotely and I will have 30 minutes in the

1  
2 morning to meet with the Dean who will be supervising  
3 my in-person classes.

4 Students will have five minutes to enter the  
5 building before their next classes. They need to be  
6 socially distant and have their temperature checked  
7 during that time. I believe that these procedures  
8 will consume precious in-person instructional time.

9 The Chancellor has told us that staff will  
10 receive training in trauma informed practices. No  
11 one I know in the DOE has gotten that as a staff but  
12 I have invested significant time and money on my own  
13 to learn more about it. And I know that creating  
14 consistency in school is essential. Dr. Redlener  
15 told us earlier today that schools will eventually  
16 close and probably sooner rather than later. We need  
17 to prepare a learning plan that will be consistent  
18 for a semester, not opening schools and then quickly  
19 closing them.

20 My Administration has spent the summer  
21 programming hybrid schedules, scrambling to put  
22 together outdoor learning spaces, and waiting for an  
23 evaluations of our building spaces. Every day more  
24 students choose to go remote and more staff seek  
25

1  
2 medical accommodations and then my Admin has to  
3 adjust their plans.

4 We need to plan now for remote learning. I urge  
5 the Council to invest heavily in high speed internet  
6 devices that work and train for teachers to prepare  
7 for high quality and consistent remote learning.

8 Thank you.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and next we will  
10 hear from Janine Sopp.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

12 JANINE SOPP: Thank you. My name is Janine Sopp,  
13 I have a Rising Senior who is facing a year full of  
14 unknowns like everyone else. Thank you for showing  
15 the kind of leadership that is missing from the Mayor  
16 and the DOE. COVID-19 has revealed the stark  
17 inequities for those who have been denied for  
18 decades. We cannot treat all schools the same when  
19 they have never been the same. This crisis is an  
20 opportunity to realign our priorities that better  
21 reflect the needs of all communities and particularly  
22 those who have systemically been disregarded as if  
23 they don't matter. We as a city have the  
24 responsibility to take actions that behave like their  
25 lives matter.

1  
2       The Mayor has had incredible guidance from the  
3 city leaders on this call. There are several models  
4 from other large schools systems. The Mayor could  
5 have easily adapted. It is so hard to understand why  
6 he did not. Instead, the Mayor and Chancellor have  
7 spent endless resources and time running out the  
8 clock with a false sales campaign to reopen schools  
9 on a timeline that is reckless and having two  
10 additional weeks will not solve this.

11       Community leaders, principals, teachers, parents,  
12 and students have been screaming on mountain tops as  
13 he has been moving in the wrong direction. Our DOE  
14 has failed at their job and they need to be replaced.  
15 They have refused to heed the voices of their  
16 constituents and have lacked transparency to all of  
17 us. We demand a safe, phased in opening of our  
18 schools. Take a look at Boston's plan, it's a very  
19 responsible plan as is your Council Member Treyger  
20 and that the Mayor needs to stop playing with our  
21 lives. We demand that remote learning is a real plan  
22 that all students can easily access. They have  
23 wasted the summer selling us the Brooklyn Bridge and  
24 not create a functional remote plan. This is  
25 unacceptable.



1  
2 We demand that the Mayor and Governor tax the  
3 millionaires and billionaires of our state to support  
4 our schools. We demand that funds -

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

6 JANINE SOPP: I have just a second. We demand  
7 that funds from police in our schools we spent on  
8 supporting school communities. We demand that the  
9 MAP test, the state test, and the Regents exams be  
10 cancelled and I would like to see those leaders on  
11 this call, these many important leaders start  
12 organizing to end mayoral control and demand  
13 community leadership and ownership of our schools  
14 once again.

15 Thank you for this hearing. Thank you so much.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and next we will  
17 hear from B. Kaiser.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

19 B. KAISER: Hi, I'm a teacher in District 14 in  
20 Brooklyn. I am here with MORE and with Black Lives  
21 Matter in New York City Schools. We've already heard  
22 students, parents, teachers, doctors, who all agree  
23 the city does not have a plan that will keep us safe.  
24 The city barely has a plan at all and it can feel  
25 like we're shouting into the void, so thank you for

1  
2 having this hearing and please continue to advocate  
3 for us.

4 Michael Mulgrew was here. Teachers feel really  
5 frustrated that he has agreed to a deal on our behalf  
6 that did not meet even our measly three demands and  
7 did not address equity at all. But at least he was  
8 here, unlike the Mayor and the Chancellor, so that's  
9 something.

10 According to the new plan, each student will be  
11 tested an average of once a year. This does not keep  
12 us safe. School safety officers will be policing  
13 students who break rules about social distancing and  
14 face masks. This is not safe. The DOE lied to us in  
15 March and people, thousands of people in our  
16 communities died and the DOE continues to lie to us  
17 now. They say that buildings have proper ventilation  
18 but the people performing tests on the buildings were  
19 not trained to do so and they said that they were  
20 told not to report buildings that failed the safety  
21 check. This is not safe.

22 The Mayor has said that teachers are receiving  
23 training for trauma informed pedagogy, we are not.  
24 This does not keep our students safe and equity has  
25 not been addressed at all. Mr. Mulgrew said this

1  
2 plan is equitable because it's same for every school,  
3 that's not equity.

4 Schools with PTA's that raise \$1 billion a year  
5 are buying extra loads of PPE, extra thermometers to  
6 check everyone's temperature instead of just a few  
7 random students. Tents and cleaning supplies, so  
8 they can have lunch outside instead of in poorly  
9 ventilated classrooms. Meanwhile in schools like  
10 mine, with many new immigrants, families aren't even  
11 getting the basic information they need. We asked if  
12 the DOE was doing anything to ensure the families  
13 traveling internationally knew they needed to  
14 quarantine before coming back to school. And like  
15 Council Member Treyger said already, the answer is,  
16 you are on your own.

17 When there are again COVID spikes in our poor  
18 Black and Latinx communities, we will all know  
19 exactly how our racist school system -

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

21 B. KAISER: We need to tax billionaires, fund our  
22 schools according to the campaign for fiscal equity,  
23 focus on access and equity for remote learning and go  
24 full remote until it's safe.

25 Thank you.

1  
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and next we will  
3 hear from Sharmilee Ramudit.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 SHARMILEE RAMUDIT: Thank you Chairman Treyger  
6 for convening this emergency hearing today. My name  
7 is Sharmilee Ramudit and I am a member of CEC3 and  
8 the Co-Chair of their Special Education Committee.

9 As you've already heard, the DOE has not released  
10 any comprehensive guidance on special education. I  
11 am particularly concerned about children who have  
12 sensory issues. These are the children who will  
13 struggle to comply with health measures such as  
14 wearing a mask all day long and should not under any  
15 circumstances be subject to additional emotional  
16 distress or exclusionary punitive discipline when  
17 they inevitably will not be able to comply with an  
18 all day mask mandate.

19 Chancellor Carranza has highlighted children with  
20 autism as an example where they are well aware that  
21 sensory issues will affect these children's ability  
22 to comply with wearing a mask. For children, whose  
23 sensory issues are exacerbated to the level where  
24 they need a one to one behavior support  
25 paraprofessional. For children that have a behavior

1  
2 implementation plan in place, these are children  
3 where sensory overload can in extreme cases send them  
4 into crisis level. Behaviors that require close  
5 contact, closer than six feet, social distancing  
6 contact in order to deescalate.

7 Pre-COVID-19 protocol included summoning the  
8 school safety agent if school staff were unable to  
9 deescalate a crisis situation. Children with a  
10 disability struggling to comply with pandemic related  
11 health measures should not be punished, excluded from  
12 in-person learning or face law enforcement.

13 And finally, at yesterday's DOE health update  
14 meeting, Chancellor Carranza cited social contract  
15 theory as the reasoning behind some of the safety  
16 policy included in the reopening plan and this  
17 explains the justification of the DOE and Mayor de  
18 Blasio and pushing forward a policy that they claim  
19 is in the best interest of students, parents, and  
20 educators.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

22 SHARMILEE RAMUDIT: One more point.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Sure, go ahead.

24 SHARMILEE RAMUDIT: Thank you. So, I just wanted  
25 to point out that social contract theory was also

1  
2 used to justify the continued enslavement of Black  
3 citizens during the antebellum period, prior to the  
4 civil war.

5 If we are really thinking about a community of  
6 care, then the DOE and Mayor de Blasio has to  
7 recenter with the guiding question, what do we owe  
8 each other? And Chairman Treyger, I really am  
9 grateful to you for embarking on that particular  
10 inquiry.

11 And so, for Martin Luther King building, it is  
12 across the street LaGuardia. If you are thinking of  
13 moving that building to the Jacob Javits Center,  
14 please leave those machines behind. They don't need  
15 machines. Thank you.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member Rosenthal has  
17 a question.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Thank you. Sharmilee,  
20 I just wanted to say hi. I'm so glad you are here to  
21 testify and reminding everyone about the needs of  
22 kids with special needs. You have been a champion on  
23 CEC3 for these kids. For all the students in our  
24 district and I'm just so happy that you have been a  
25 leader in this space and I wanted to encourage you to

1 do more. You know, and it's great that you are here  
2 today bringing up an issue that hardly anyone has  
3 talked about. It's always the case that the kids who  
4 need more, we talk about them less.

5 So, thank you very much, appreciate it. Thanks  
6 Chair.

7 SHARMILEE RAMUDIT: Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And that concludes this  
9 panel. We will now move to the next one. On the  
10 next panel, we have Kaliris Salas, Yuli Hsu, Rachel  
11 Posner, and Tamara Gayer and we will start with  
12 Kaliris Salas.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, we can come back.  
15 Let's unmute Yuli Hsu please.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

17 YULI HSU: Hello, can you hear me?

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, just talk a little  
19 louder.

20 YULI HSU: Sure. My name is Yuli and I am a  
21 CEC14 Vice President and Member of PRESS NYC, parent  
22 supporter of MORE caucus and New York City school  
23 worker solidarity campaign. I am also the town ease  
24 American public school parent of two in Brooklyn.  
25

1  
2 First, I want to say as a parent, I stand in  
3 solidarity with school staff because our school staff  
4 working environments are our childrens learning  
5 environments. Remote learning was not easy for me  
6 and my two boys but we must go to 100 percent remote  
7 because there are too many deal breakers in the  
8 school reopening plans and they must be addressed  
9 before we return to schools.

10 And there are many other issues that need to have  
11 been addressed long before this pandemic. New York  
12 City schools have been segregated, racist, unsafe,  
13 and underfunded for decades. The erasure diminishing  
14 and silencing of Black and Brown, Asian POC and  
15 female voices is institutionally supported and has  
16 brought us to this broken education system and these  
17 nonsensical and impossible to execute reopening  
18 plans.

19 And this is not just about reopening schools but  
20 about building a new education system with true  
21 equity, which is centering and engaging and  
22 prioritizing the most impacted Black, Brown, special  
23 education, multilingual communities in funding and  
24 planning.



1  
2 Because no amount of resolutions or safety  
3 checklists will make up for the fact that schools  
4 cannot comply with any safety checklist, testing plan  
5 or reopening plan without money. Council Member  
6 Treyger you talked about trust but the City Council,  
7 you have broken that trust with your city budget.  
8 The resolution does not once mention the lack of  
9 funding for our schools. The City Council has had  
10 six months to prioritize funding for our schools.  
11 That was your job to secure funding. Start  
12 rebuilding trust by bringing us a budget th at  
13 prioritizes students and school staff over opening  
14 the economy.

15 I thank you for explaining in more detail about  
16 the reasoning behind the June 30<sup>th</sup> budget vote. I  
17 also do not support Cuomo being in control of the  
18 city school budget, but it will not stop me from  
19 pushing you and other City Council Members here from  
20 continuing to advocate –

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

22 YULI HSU: For funding because that is the bare  
23 minimum, especially during a pandemic. We must all  
24 stand up and fight for our public school education  
25 funds and call on the Mayor and the Governor to make

1  
2 billionaires pay. Fund New York Schools and Black  
3 Lives Matter.

4 Thank you.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we will hear from  
6 Rachel Posner.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

8 RACHEL POSNER: I am a parent of a 7-year-old, a  
9 teacher of 9<sup>th</sup> graders, a member of PRESS NYC and the  
10 MORE caucus. I've spent 17 years working with New  
11 York City's vibrant teenagers and now three months  
12 teaching online while parenting a strong willed,  
13 highly social young child for whom the isolation of  
14 remote instruction was excruciating.

15 Bottom line, until it is truly safe, schools must  
16 be remote with prioritized exceptions because  
17 excruciating beats dead. I've spent the most  
18 stressful summer of my life hearing DOE folks lying  
19 to parents in dystopian perky tones about how they  
20 will magically keep everybody safe. Their denial and  
21 attempt to sound certain, couldn't hide that nothing  
22 they said was financially possible or made any sense  
23 to anyone who has ever been in a school or read an  
24 article about COVID transmission.

1  
2       The Mayor ignored over 50 groups connected to  
3 schools who bravely spoke out to say it's not safe to  
4 open. He ignored the ten hour pep where hundreds  
5 described losing co-workers, non-existent  
6 ventilation, stark racial inequities, unavailable  
7 broadband, lack of training. The next day, nada,  
8 just more gaslighting and distrust and half baked  
9 checklists from the Mayor. Ignoring people and what  
10 they know is gravely dehumanizing and I am tired of  
11 education which is a profoundly human process being  
12 treated like a spreadsheet. Every parent and teacher  
13 knows that just because adults need kids to act a  
14 certain way, doesn't mean they will, deadly virus or  
15 not.

16       We can create a perfect plan on paper but kids  
17 are not robots that cater to adult convenience. They  
18 have complex emotions, anxieties, they can act out.  
19 They may struggle with impulse control or empathy or  
20 weighing choices. Like parents, teachers feel  
21 responsible for our kids actions, although even the  
22 most skillful educator can't control those other  
23 young humans.

24       We cannot respond to kids existing trauma, nor  
25 create a space for the joyful risk taking of learning

1  
2 while having to obsessively police their every  
3 movement when the result of -

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

5 RACHEL POSNER: An innocent mistake, I'm almost  
6 finished, could be life and death. And we cannot put  
7 our kids in a position where they could feel they  
8 played any part in someone death. Thank you.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and it looks like  
10 we have Kaliris Salas back on the line, so Kaliris,  
11 please go ahead.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

13 KALIRIS SALAS: Hi, my name is Kaliris Salas and  
14 I am a parent of a Rising 4<sup>th</sup> grader at Central Park  
15 East One Elementary School, which is in District 4 in  
16 Harlem.

17 My beautiful Black son has motivated me to become  
18 a parent leader in my community. So, I have the  
19 privilege to also chair the SLT in his school and be  
20 the President of CEC4.

21 Because of my complete disagreement with the  
22 negligent plans presented by the Department of  
23 Education and Mayor de Blasio, I am also a proud  
24 member of PRESS NYC. Parents for Responsive  
25 Equitable Safe Schools.

1  
2 I want to share a little bit about our story. My  
3 son has an IEP since he has been in kindergarten and  
4 has a one on one para because of the behavioral  
5 dysregulation and a sense of loss and abandonment  
6 when schools closed in March, really affected his  
7 engagement in remote learning in the spring.

8 The fear of people he loves contracting the  
9 virus, really became his focus for months. I chose a  
10 progressive school for him because of the support the  
11 school provides for children with learning  
12 differences. The experiential learning and the  
13 collaborative teaching practices. I've been  
14 fortunate that he has not had any significant  
15 regression since school ended because of the support  
16 of his educators. But I'm certainly concerned about  
17 what school will be for him moving forward.

18 Independent of that, I've chosen full remote  
19 learning for my son. You see, for my day job, I'm a  
20 neuroscientist who trains physicians. I have had to  
21 send my students to the frontlines and I've supported  
22 them as they have had sleepless nights in the clinic  
23 because of this pandemic. Some of my 20 something  
24 year old former students have had contracted COVID in  
25

1 their hospitals and have been on ventilators.

2 Fortunately, most of them have survived.

3 They have openly told me to not send my child to  
4 school. As a parent in east Harlem, my neighborhood  
5 has been the most affected by COVID in all of  
6 Manhattan. We have had such loss in our community  
7 and the level trauma has been experienced within our  
8 communities indescribable.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

10 KALIRIS SALAS: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Would you like to wrap up?

12 KALIRIS SALAS: Yeah, I just wanted to say that  
13 in addition to that, as a neuroscientist, I have to  
14 say that these protocols that have been implemented  
15 are developmentally inappropriate and so, in turn I  
16 have a significant concern on how we are going to  
17 support our most vulnerable communities with this  
18 plan moving forward. Thank you.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and finally, we  
20 will hear from Tamara Gayer.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

22 TAMARA GAYER: Hello, can you hear me?

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, go ahead.  
24  
25

1  
2 TAMARA GAYER: Okay, hello, my name is Tamara and  
3 I am a mother of a Rising 5<sup>th</sup> grader in District 14.  
4 I am also our Parent Association President, a member  
5 of RSLT and our safety committee and Presidents  
6 Council and PRESS NYC. And I live in the Latino  
7 neighborhood of South Williamsburg. My neighborhood  
8 was devastated by COVID.

9 There was a day in April when I was really  
10 distraught because I had just learned that a friend  
11 had died and I happened to go downstairs and I ran  
12 into a neighbor who asked me what I was up to and I  
13 told him that I just – the 4th person I knew just  
14 died and he calmly replied that he knew 11 dead. So,  
15 that gave me a really sobering perspective on the  
16 inequity of how this disease has moved through our  
17 city.

18 Fast forward to yesterday on our safety committee  
19 at school, sorry, I learned that even at this late  
20 date, five months later, the DOE's track and trace  
21 protocol that will shut down classrooms is riddled  
22 with contradictions. For example, if two kids are  
23 asked to get tested on the same day but their tests  
24 come back more than seven days apart, that will not  
25 qualify as two cases necessary to shut down a school.

1  
2 Or if a child is in a class that is asked to  
3 quarantine, their sibling in another school, that  
4 school will not be automatically notified.

5       Doesn't the DOE know what contact means. And  
6 that's just two examples. All this policy serves to  
7 do is to obscure the fact that there is no way to  
8 minimize COVID spreading through a school in the  
9 current blended model. What we need is compulsory  
10 and regular testing for everyone going into a school  
11 building. There is no other way to pretend that we  
12 can even approach safety and if we don't do this, the  
13 most marginalized among us will be ravaged and you  
14 know the list. Black, Latinx, Special Ed Students,  
15 and students in temporary housing.

16       And due to the decades of underfunding coupled  
17 with recent budget cuts from the state on top of  
18 which -

19       SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

20       TAMARA GAYER: One more sentence. Couldn't bring  
21 itself to reallocate funds from the NYPD to education  
22 in June. The only way to achieve this comprehensive  
23 testing is to tax New Yorkers richest citizens, who  
24 are also citizens of this fair city. They have  
25 gotten richer during this pandemic. So, I call for a



1  
2 true delay that will allow us to fix these protocols,  
3 secure funding and create a path to long overdue  
4 equity in New York City public schools systems.

5 Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you. Thank you very  
7 much and I just want to say, I appreciate the very  
8 important advocacy speaking up, not just for your  
9 individual school community but for all kids and all  
10 staff. And again, I am speaking now as a teacher as  
11 well that schools mean everything to me and I just  
12 want to just, for one point of clarification. I  
13 heard some other speaker mentioned that there was a  
14 \$1 billion cut to schools. There was no \$1 billion  
15 cut to school budgets. That would have meant  
16 thousands of teachers not having a position in the  
17 school. There were cuts that were made to DOE  
18 Central to consultants. They reduced their travel  
19 expense budget but there are certain initiatives that  
20 we have to restore, like community schools, which I  
21 greatly support and the Mayor cut teachers choice at  
22 the last moment, which we fought so hard to increase.

23 But I still absolutely would never hand the city  
24 finances over to the Governor who has underfunded and  
25 so, and we have work to do and we accept – we

1  
2 absolutely accept this responsibility to keep this  
3 fight to have fully funded schools but we are going  
4 to need city and state and federal support to make  
5 this happen. And I just – I truly appreciate your  
6 critical advocacy on behalf of all of our kids and  
7 all of our school staff. I do appreciate that.

8 TAMARA GAYER: And we appreciate your advocacy as  
9 well but you have to let us know how we can help you  
10 with your fellow Council Member because  
11 unfortunately, it is a collective vote at the end of  
12 the day and we understand the difficult choices but  
13 not everyone was making difficult choices. We all  
14 have to acknowledge them.

15 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yeah, I do and I appreciate  
16 that. Thank you so much.

17 TAMARA GAYER: Thank you as well.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, that is all the  
19 testimony for this panel. We will now move onto the  
20 next. Joel Kupferman, Olivia Swisher, and Matthew  
21 Sarker. We will first start with Joel.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

23 JOEL KUPFERMAN: Greetings. Do you hear me now?

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Go ahead Joel.  
25

1  
2 JOEL KUPFERMAN: Good afternoon. I represent the  
3 COVID-19 Accountability Working Group composed of  
4 community leaders, scientists, public health,  
5 physicians and more. And the National Lawyer Guild  
6 Environmental Injustice Committee.

7 Thank you for today. Residents of communities of  
8 color and lower income and disability suffer the  
9 brunt of the toxic exposure to a greater degree than  
10 any other New Yorkers as described today. Rushed  
11 assessments and stopped the absolutions provided by  
12 the city are clearly inadequate with no time for  
13 critique allowed even for the short term opened time  
14 for the city.

15 The city is open to legal liability for putting  
16 students and staff into the zone of danger. A  
17 violation of a myriad of laws and regulations.  
18 Current preparation for in-person education is based  
19 on current conditions such as warm weather and low  
20 COVID numbers.

21 The Committee Report on ventilation system in the  
22 schools really tells it as Monona Russell stated  
23 before as related by Robin and continues. The room  
24 served by air conditioning and or unit ventilators  
25 cannot be made safe without major changes in

1  
2 additional equipment, such as HEPA filters or  
3 designing and installing dilution exhaust systems.

4 Two windows open six inches is not a way to bring  
5 in clean air. Instead, each system should be  
6 evaluated and the engineers should provide the rating  
7 of the filter, the number of the air exchanges per  
8 hour, and a percentage of fresh air provided. These  
9 three variable must be used together to provide for  
10 rapid clearing of the aerosol particles from the air.

11 A recent study shows that over half the schools  
12 don't even have exhaust fans and the majority of  
13 those that do are not as efficient.

14 We also have a history of problems in the  
15 schools. The school is just discounting, there was  
16 no talking about PCB's in the schools. There was  
17 windows covered with caulking. With PCB's -

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

19 JOEL KUPFERMAN: I just want to also say is, to  
20 just finish up, have we learned nothing from 911?  
21 Students, teachers, and staff were ordered to return  
22 to schools contaminated with World Trade Center dust,  
23 smoke and enduring all warnings including data and  
24 expert advice. The city denied the dangers instead  
25 of addressing the environmental health risks. Is the

1  
2 city going to follow the 911 playbook with schools  
3 now? Apparently yes.

4 The rushed assessment and the stop gap measures  
5 recommended by the city are flawed and inadequate and  
6 will put students, teachers, staff, and those they  
7 come into contact with at risk for infection.

8 Standards have been cited but are not sufficient.

9 Stricter standards are required and those published  
10 by ACIGH and AIHA are much better and we offer those  
11 reports to the City Council.

12 And also, Mark, what we'd like to do is offer you  
13 and the City Council Members and the Staff a two hour  
14 training course in terms of all of the industrial  
15 hygiene standards and we also believe that City  
16 Council should be hiring their own staff. With such  
17 a large budget, they should not rely on the city in  
18 terms Mayor's office. You even pointed out that the  
19 Mayor's Office doesn't show. We go back a long ways  
20 and to say that such a major change in the school  
21 system could be based on rapid assessments flies in  
22 the face of all environmental review that I'm sure  
23 you know that you are well aware of Chairman Treyger  
24 and you have fought for many years. To reduce it to  
25 an assessment that's not even allowed peer review,

1  
2 flies in the face of reasoning and flies in the face  
3 of the law and I'm very concerned that the 911 story  
4 is being repeated now. We are going to hear stories  
5 of students and Stuyvesant and other schools. We're  
6 forced to go back into those schools. They are  
7 getting sick; many have died and the city was open to  
8 much liability. I really urge the City Council to be  
9 concerned about all the lawyers that are lining up  
10 figuring out how to sue the city for putting their  
11 kids, their staff, and even Council Members in the  
12 zone of danger.

13 Thank you.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and next we will  
15 hear from Olivia Swisher. Olivia?

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

17 OLIVIA SWISHER: Can you hear me?

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, go ahead.

19 OLIVIA SWISHER: Okay, my name is Olivia Swisher,  
20 I am a middle school art teacher at Sunset Park.  
21 Council Member Menchaca, thank you for standing in  
22 solidarity with us on Tuesday. Thank you for  
23 standing up for our community today.

24 I come from multiple generations of teachers.  
25 Two weeks ago, my mother welcomed students to her

1  
2 extremely well-funded classroom at an American school  
3 in Germany and they have already had COVID symptoms  
4 in students in a community with a lower transmission  
5 rate than Sunset Park.

6 She has every single resource that we, New York  
7 City teachers are demanding. And yet, they are still  
8 facing issues with reopening their school buildings.  
9 She told me just last night that I need to keep  
10 organizing, rallying, calling, tweeting, emailing,  
11 and speaking publicly because as teachers, it is our  
12 duty to protect students and their families from  
13 returning to unsafe school buildings. So, I am here  
14 today.

15 As a teacher in Sunset Park, I know first hand  
16 the trauma my middle school students and my  
17 colleagues face during coronavirus and still ongoing.  
18 I had 11 and 12-year-old students who would come to  
19 Google Meets but not show their face or turn their  
20 audio on. When I would call them after class to  
21 check in on them, they shared that everyone in their  
22 family had the corona and that they were scared. I  
23 wonder how many people in power that are making  
24 decisions have had this type of experience? Their  
25 plans indicate that they have not had this type of

1  
2 experience, otherwise they would have made different  
3 choices.

4 This current plan does not help the working class  
5 families of Sunset Park. This current plan means my  
6 school is going to be likely in school for three  
7 days, remote for two weeks. In school for two days,  
8 remote for two weeks. Every educator and parent in  
9 this space knows that disruption is the last thing  
10 our children need. They need consistency.

11 On a personal note, my husband in the high risk  
12 category but I am personally not at high risk, so I  
13 am unable to apply for medical accommodation.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

15 OLIVIA SWISHER: Can I just finish really  
16 quickly? Thank you. I do not want to put him at  
17 risk. I cannot support the current plans because  
18 unfortunately, it is not – and if there is an  
19 outbreak at my school, it is a when there is an  
20 outbreak at my school.

21 So, I ask of the Council, fully fund our schools,  
22 delay the reopening of buildings until it is safe and  
23 center and engage our most impacted students and  
24 families. Thank you.



1  
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and finally, we  
3 will hear from Matthew Sarker.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 MATTHEW SARKER: Hi, sorry, can you hear me?

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, go ahead.

7 MATTHEW SARKER: Sorry. I didn't really prepare  
8 my statement because I just had to do a lot of stuff  
9 but I'm a physics and engineer in the Bronx. My name  
10 is Matthew Sarker, I live in the district and I just  
11 felt gaslit for a long time. So much of what I feel  
12 has been echoed, so I want to just say one thing.  
13 When you are solving a problem, you start with  
14 people's needs and that's what we've heard this  
15 entire time on this call. And the Mayor's plan  
16 basically started with a solution. It started all  
17 wrong and he's kind of pushed forward without hearing  
18 peoples needs.

19 So, that's been the most frustrating part right  
20 now is that my school cannot solve its own problems  
21 because we're trying to figure out how to make the  
22 Mayor's plans, that are unclear, work and that is my  
23 biggest - I don't expect the Mayor to solve our  
24 problems. Almost by design, he cannot but this  
25 failed attempt at a solution is preventing us from

1  
2 solving our own problems. 90 percent of the students  
3 in my school have opted for remote and even it was  
4 100 percent, we would still be forced to go into the  
5 building and all of this has prevented us from making  
6 the remote experience work better.

7 I just want to thank everyone who has been on  
8 this call and Chair Treyger for giving this platform.  
9 I want to say to people, this fight is not over.  
10 Please do not give up. I am inspired by everyone on  
11 this call and I thank everyone for just for the  
12 efforts that we've had to put into this.

13 Please, please, don't - the one good thing that  
14 has come out of this is that we've built our own  
15 capacity and I think we need to continue to build  
16 that capacity to solve problems. The DOE, when  
17 they've had a freedom of head start have failed at  
18 producing a coherent plan and when things go wrong  
19 potentially in September or October, like we need to  
20 rely on each other and ourselves. Please, help us  
21 get those resources so that we can solve our own  
22 problems. Thank you everyone.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. That concludes  
24 the testimony from this panel. We will now move to  
25 the next one. Amy Breedlove, Deirdre Levy, Carolyn

1  
2 Tyner, Travis Malekpour. We will start with Amy  
3 Breedlove.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 AMY BREEDLOVE: Hi, I'm Amy Breedlove and today I  
6 testify as a parent of a Rising 3<sup>rd</sup> grader at PS261  
7 Phillip Livingston School in Berm Hill Brooklyn.

8 Our principal lost her life partner who was a DOE  
9 worker to COVID-19 in March. That affects my son,  
10 that affects our school community. We are scared. I  
11 personally have completely written this year off as  
12 an opportunity for my son to advance academically.

13 That's hard to admit. I value education very  
14 highly. This hurts. I don't feel comfortable  
15 sending my son to school. Here is reason number one.  
16 I am no way confident that aerosol spread virus can  
17 be contained in a closed interior space serviced by  
18 old and malfunctioning heating and ventilation  
19 systems.

20 The Chancellors defense of the toilet paper air  
21 flow test is an outrage. Showing that air flows out  
22 of a vent is not a safety check and provides no proof  
23 of anything. I support my Council Member Brad  
24 Lander's appeal for a plan for outdoor learning. The  
25 Chancellor has finally acknowledged this idea and has

1  
2 advanced it to individual schools to adopt on their  
3 own, applying to DOT and other agencies to  
4 administer.

5 He suggests that the PTA's pay for this  
6 accommodation and to make it equitable. He suggests  
7 that more privileged communities pay for other  
8 schools. We all need to do our part but this is an  
9 outrageous suggestion. Where is the DOE's  
10 contribution to keeping our children safe and  
11 educating them?

12 This sounds dangerously close to suggesting that  
13 we privatize our public system. I have to say it,  
14 really the DOE couldn't get a plan together. Outdoor  
15 learning was implementing during the tuberculosis  
16 outbreak, also an aerosol spread virus. We are not  
17 asking the DOT, DOE, sorry to be extremely creative.  
18 It's not like putting mimes in control of traffic  
19 issues like the Mayor of Bogota Columbia did.

20 We cannot open our schools or do outdoor learning

21 -

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

23 AMY BREEDLOVE: Gets a plan together that makes  
24 it safe for students, families, administrators, and  
25 teachers. Let's get a plan and a protocol when a

1  
2 school community member is sick. Can we get rapid  
3 testing on site? Can we make smart decisions of how  
4 to close should an infection breakout and what are  
5 you doing to ensure that the children's mental state  
6 of health is considered?

7 My kid doesn't want to go to school. He is  
8 afraid, he is afraid of the government not protecting  
9 him. His classmates talk about children in gages and  
10 that the President is going to destroy their lives  
11 and this is what we deal with as parents and it is  
12 too much stress for all of us to take on ourselves  
13 and we look to the government to help us out.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and next we will  
15 hear from Deirdre Levy.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

17 DEIRDRE LEVY: Good afternoon. First, I'd like  
18 to thank the Education Committee Chair Council Member  
19 Treyger for holding this hearing and to the Council  
20 Members here to listen to our testimony today.

21 My name is Deirdre Levy and I am a Special  
22 Education Teacher at PS9 in Brooklyn. This September  
23 will mark my 8<sup>th</sup> year of teaching. In the beginning  
24 of April, my friend and colleague Sandra Vizcaino,  
25

1  
2 was the first teacher in the Department of Education  
3 to pass away due to complications from COVID-19.

4 We were all together in her room on March 19<sup>th</sup>.  
5 The last day that we were mandated to be in school.  
6 She passed away that first week of April. Sandra  
7 would not be the only colleague I worked with to fall  
8 victim to this virus. A few days later, I learned  
9 that my former paraprofessional Mr. V. passed away  
10 from COVID-19 as well.

11 This was a heartbreaking time for me given that  
12 we were all socially isolated from each other, all  
13 while being expected to plan and carry on with school  
14 activities, amidst losing colleagues. March 13<sup>th</sup> was  
15 the last day that I was in school with my students  
16 and colleagues. But teachers were required to be in  
17 the school to plan for remote learning after that.  
18 We received no guidance from DOE on how to proceed.  
19 Our guidance came from our Administrators.

20 It was a lot to manage virtual learning this past  
21 year especially since I wasn't adequately prepared to  
22 adapt to this learning style. However, I stepped up  
23 and I did it. I visited a student in a shelter and  
24 delivered him food. I met up with other students in  
25 the neighborhood to give them coloring books.

1  
2 Recently, I've been hosting ready notebook workshops.  
3 I taught summer school virtually this past summer and  
4 felt very connected to my students.

5 Most of our planning was done with our colleagues  
6 in grade teams back in March. Ms. V. had a big role  
7 in our grade team. She always sent us emails. When  
8 I didn't hear from her in a few days, I was very  
9 concerned. It broke my heart to lose two colleagues  
10 within the same week. Every day when I read about  
11 safety plans in place and reopening -

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

13 DEIRDRE LEVY: So, thank you for listening and  
14 have a great day.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and next, we will  
16 hear from Carolyn Tyner.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

18 CAROLYN TYNER: Thank you City Council Members  
19 for letting us speak today. I am an Educator in  
20 District 15 in Brooklyn and I support a fully remote  
21 start to the school year until all safety demands are  
22 met.

23 So, the Mayor says that school reopening is a  
24 matter of parent choice but many of us know that not  
25 all parents have equal choices. How can working

1  
2 class parents be expected to choose between their  
3 jobs that provide money for food and shelter and  
4 sending their child to potentially unsafe schools.  
5 Either way, they have to make substantial sacrifices  
6 for their families survival.

7 Parents, teachers, and educators have been  
8 demanding more funding for schools which will provide  
9 adequate PPE ventilation and mandatory testing for  
10 all people who enter school buildings, not random  
11 testing once a month.

12 The agreement the Mayor came to with UFT  
13 leadership does not address issues with school  
14 funding, particularly the 20 percent budget cut  
15 coming from the State Education Department that would  
16 result in thousand of teacher layoffs and undoubtedly  
17 make it more difficult to afford the safety measures  
18 our school building need.

19 The Mayor says we can make up for gaps in funding  
20 through PTA fundraising but this is unrealistic and  
21 inequitable. It is not the responsibility of  
22 individual parents and educators to make up for where  
23 the DOE has failed us.

24 Furthermore, we know for a fact that some schools  
25 have well peered PTA's that will be able to meet



1  
2 safety demand, while other schools simply do not have  
3 this extra wealth. This means that the health of our  
4 low-income predominantly Black and Brown students and  
5 their families will be put in jeopardy.

6 Another issue with the Mayor's plan is a complete  
7 lack of discussion of public transit. No matter how  
8 prepared the school buildings are, reopening  
9 buildings will require hundreds of thousands of staff  
10 and students to take public transit every day.

11 It has been said that schools in neighborhoods  
12 with higher infection rates will stay closed, but as  
13 we know, many students and staff commute from outside  
14 their own neighborhoods to get to school buildings.  
15 Flooding public transit with more commuters as follow  
16 up was a substantial risk of outbreak and not just  
17 for schools but for the entire city.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

19 CAROLYN TYNER: May I finish?

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yeah, if you want to wrap up,  
21 go ahead.

22 CAROLYN TYNER: We saw in March and April how  
23 devastating this virus was for our Black and Latinx  
24 communities who were disproportionately affected.  
25 The Mayor and Chancellor with this plan are clearly

1  
2 saying that Black and Brown lives do not matter to  
3 them. That the health of the economy is more  
4 important than the health of our communities. My  
5 students, co-workers and their families are not  
6 capitalists pawns to be sacrificed and their health  
7 and safety must come first.

8 Thank you again and I urge you to delay the  
9 reopening of school buildings until schools are fully  
10 funded.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and next we will  
12 hear from Travis.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

14 TRAVIS MALEKPOUR: Hey, good afternoon. My name  
15 is Travis Malekpour, I am a Special Education Teacher  
16 at Benjamin N. Cardozo High School in Bayside and a  
17 member of MORE UFT.

18 I want to strongly state that the current  
19 proposals for reopening schools do not inspire  
20 confidence or safety in our teachers, staff, parents  
21 or students and we do not trust the Mayor or DOE to  
22 do the right thing.

23 We should be 100 percent remote. We have so many  
24 Questions that continue to go unanswered. We still  
25 have no answers on childcare for DOE employees with

1  
2 children or wavers for staff that live with people  
3 who have medical conditions. Our building did not  
4 magically become safe this summer. Our schools have  
5 not had major capital projects. At best, this is a  
6 duct tape solution for a situation that requires a  
7 skill trades response. These are things that have  
8 been said since we closed in March. Hell, they  
9 should have been things we always had to address. We  
10 do not have the staff needed to serve our children or  
11 the space to do it in. Before COVID-19, my school  
12 was at 167 percent capacity. To be clear, we are  
13 lucky that a new wing is being build. That will  
14 probably take a long time.

15       The building that we are in was built three years  
16 after the Civil Rights Act was passed. We don't have  
17 an HVAC system, our building has extremely poor  
18 ventilation. We leave the windows open to our  
19 classes year around because of the air constantly  
20 choking our students. One of my colleagues wears  
21 shorts year around because the building is so hot.

22       One year, a student passed out from the heat in  
23 our building while taking the Physics Regents. The  
24 problems we hear about at the MLK campus is going  
25 across way for our schools citywide, okay. The Mayor

1  
2 promised AC's in every high school by 2022. How will  
3 this be fixed by then? We should be having  
4 conversations about how we are going to improve our  
5 school buildings permanently. We should be putting  
6 in the work to make sure that we have schools with  
7 lead free water and clean air.

8 To be clear, there should not be a global  
9 pandemic going on to address basic human rights.  
10 Watching water bottles get passed around in 2018-2019  
11 school year, while lead pipes was cruel at best.  
12 This slap stick approach will have disastrous  
13 results. So, I'm lucky that I will be teaching  
14 remotely.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

16 TRAVIS MALEKPOUR: I'm going to wrap something up  
17 real quick, is what about those who have the help?  
18 We have teachers in our school who are younger and  
19 healthier than me that may get sick but don't have  
20 that option afforded to them.

21 The previous concerns about public transit are  
22 alarming and we have to remember that staff come from  
23 upstate New York, Long Island, New Jersey,  
24 Connecticut. And that's something we don't even  
25 think about. This can be a national issue as well.

1  
2 I also want to just emphasize real quick, that  
3 for remote learning, I spoke to Oliver Goldstein at  
4 Francis High School this morning who told me that  
5 they will have to bring over 100 teachers in the  
6 school buildings to teach remotely. Yes, people will  
7 be teaching in buildings to teach remotely, okay.  
8 The schools do not have enough bandwidth to sustain  
9 the data that will be required to do this and host  
10 over 100 remote classes. Those teachers will have to  
11 wear a mask while teaching remotely. Imagine trying  
12 to hear a teacher through the DOE issued computer  
13 without an external microphone. If you want to buy  
14 equipment or meet your \$250 and the teachers choice  
15 was cut anyway.

16 So, this is a cruel encounter productive decision  
17 to put teachers in. Since 2017, I have been  
18 emphasizing that technology has been something that  
19 has been discounted by the DOE. We can make remote  
20 teaching much better than we have but we need systems  
21 accountability and equity for our students,  
22 especially for English Language learners and our  
23 students with disabilities that I serve every single  
24 day. They need laptops and Chrome book and keyboards  
25 that can use in screen setting, not an iPad and quite

1  
2 frankly, the [INAUDIBLE 5:40:14] should be setting up  
3 alarm bells but it seems that nothing will get the  
4 Governor, Mayor, or Chancellor to budge. Tax the  
5 rich, fund the schools, Black Lives Matter.

6 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I want to thank you for  
7 your powerful words and when you mentioned that the  
8 building was built right after the Civil Rights Act,  
9 the Utrecht High School where I used to teach was  
10 built right after World War I and we haven't seen a  
11 lot of the wiring fixed since World War I and  
12 absolutely hear you. You are absolutely correct and  
13 I want folks to know that I mentioned school  
14 infrastructure issues at the beginning of my tenure  
15 as Chair of this Committee and it wasn't always the  
16 most covered topic for a lot of folks. Now, it's  
17 being magnified but many of knew about these issues  
18 years before. We did get them to put money into  
19 accessibility because my building was not very  
20 accessible. I'm sure yours has issues for kids and  
21 staff as well, but on the suggestions for remote  
22 learning, spot on. Those are excellent suggestions  
23 and we have a lot more work to do. And I just want  
24 to thank you for your service and I'm in full  
25 solidarity.

1  
2 TRAVIS MALEKPOUR: Chair Treyger, can I just  
3 mention one last thing to?

4 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yes, please.

5 TRAVIS MALEKPOUR: One of the things that we  
6 haven't really touched yet is the bathrooms. It is  
7 to the point of intense concern. The journal of  
8 physics showed that both urine and fecal matters spec  
9 COVID when flush mechanisms and toilets are in use.  
10 And most schools, there is no lids on a toilet, there  
11 is no cleaning supplies ready for the toilet, do  
12 dispenser for the toilet paper. So, people unravel  
13 it like this by hand, which is disgusting. Just on  
14 your average day and there is none in the bathroom  
15 and no toilets are more than a few feet apart for the  
16 most part.

17 So, I know that I'm sublimating, so I think we  
18 don't really talk about bathrooms because it is gross  
19 but when it comes down to it, they are major concern.

20 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Absolutely. Thank you so  
21 much. We appreciate you being here today.

22 TRAVIS MALEKPOUR: Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Sure.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, that's concludes that  
25 panel and we have two panels left. First, we will

1  
2 call Akelia Morris Maitland, Elisa Crespo, Molly  
3 Bruhn, and Jane Maisel. And then the panel after  
4 that will be Lisa Bowstead, Charesh Wald, Marilyn  
5 Moore, and Nelson Mar. We will start with Akelia  
6 Morris Maitland.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

8 AKELIA MORRIS MAITLAND: Hi, good afternoon  
9 Councilman Treyger. I thank you for hearing voice on  
10 this, it's really encouraging. I am a member of PS20  
11 and School Leadership Team and a Co-Chair of that  
12 school leadership team and I won't be redundant  
13 because a lot of the points that we have have been  
14 raised. We were able to advocate for most of our  
15 parents to opting to remote learning leveraging our  
16 privilege to say hey, we might be inconvenient but we  
17 are going to leave space for those in need to come on  
18 site for school. But really we endorse that as many  
19 families that need to be in remote, should go remote  
20 and really calling for DOE to do the same thing as  
21 well, because there is just no good protocol that you  
22 can put in place.

23 I am a frontline administrator. I have been in  
24 the front putting in place safety protocols for  
25 small, much smaller settings and now, I'm still going



1  
2 through the up and down in the disruption of having  
3 to deal with cases and people having to quarantine  
4 and short staffing and so, it's a very, very  
5 disruptive plan. Because testing, we know a lot  
6 about false positive, false negatives. We know about  
7 testing delays and our schools have just not  
8 experienced what I've experienced over the past  
9 couple of months trying to figure out how do we  
10 staff? How do we go through these disruptions? And  
11 so, I really wanted to call for the same thing that  
12 families have been calling for on this call, 100  
13 percent remote learning. Provide resources to  
14 families whether it is respite or localized pods, to  
15 support families as best as we can.

16 But one point and I know I'm coming on 28 seconds  
17 Councilman Treyger is that you are in a unique  
18 position in this time. Most of the calls today is  
19 around justice and equity. We have been calling for  
20 the redesign of our police system but that's a  
21 redesign of every single system.

22 How do we use the COVID pause to develop a  
23 proposal around a just and equitable school system?  
24 Instead of trying to put Band aides on it, let's  
25 pause -

1  
2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

3 AKELIA MAITLAND: In this year and come up with a  
4 proposal. Lead your Committee, leverage your status,  
5 leverage your privilege to come up with a proposal  
6 around something that is just and equitable.

7 Thank you so much for having me on this. I  
8 appreciate it.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and next we will  
10 hear from Elisa Crespo.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

12 ELISA CRESPO: Good afternoon. My name is Elisa  
13 Crespo, I am resident of the Bronx and I work very  
14 closely with education stakeholders here in the  
15 borough. I also have family members who are  
16 attending New York City Public Schools, so I am quite  
17 concerned about the reopening of schools.

18 Frankly, I do not believe that the DOE has the  
19 capacity and the wear with all to ensure the safety  
20 of our schools. To ensure the safety of hundreds of  
21 thousands of students who are going to be in blended  
22 learning. The Bronx has particularly been hit hard  
23 by this coronavirus pandemic and any decision that's  
24 made with respect to reopening schools will most  
25 definitely have an impact on low-come families of

1  
2 color and on the immigrant populations that live in  
3 the Bronx.

4 The consequences of decisions, of our decision  
5 will fall hardest on our most vulnerable residents  
6 and in the Bronx, we have had enough. We have  
7 suffered enough. This is decision that is not only  
8 going to impact our students, but our educators, our  
9 Administrative staff, kitchen staff, para's,  
10 custodians, social workers, and nurses.

11 How dare we say that we cannot have indoor dining  
12 and then turn around and say that kids can eat lunch  
13 in classrooms. It makes no sense.

14 We are also hearing from the Bronx District  
15 Planning office that TCU's are going to stay in order  
16 for our students to abide by social distance  
17 guideline, which makes absolutely no sense to me.  
18 REC Centers, parents have no information about those.  
19 That is unacceptable. We should not open schools  
20 until there are zero new cases of COVID-19 within a  
21 two week period until our schools are fully funded  
22 and if we have to tax the rich to do that, then so be  
23 it.

24 Until our families receive adequate financial  
25 support for childcare and if we have to tax the rich

1  
2 to do that, then so be it. Until teachers and staff  
3 are truly involved in the reopening process and we  
4 must have rapid testing in schools, not tests that  
5 take days or weeks to return results.

6 I am particularly concerned about students with  
7 IEP's and English Language learners.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

9 ELISA CRESPO: We need to make sure that there is  
10 a concrete plan in place for this population of  
11 students. Moreover, a plan must be in place that  
12 ensures the students who are part of the digital  
13 divide, many of whom are here in the Bronx, are  
14 equipped with the necessary tools they need to  
15 receive what is their right to a sound and basic  
16 education including free wi-fi and access to  
17 electronic devices. We cannot rush this decision; we  
18 must take our time. Hundreds of thousands of student  
19 are relying on us to get this right.

20 I want to thank Chair Treyger. I want to thank  
21 Council Member Carlos Menchaca for his work. I want  
22 to thank Council Member Helen Rosenthal for your  
23 work. I want to thank the MORE caucus of the UFT and  
24 I want to thank Teens Take Charge for all of their  
25 great work as young leaders. Thank you.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you. Thank you for  
3 your powerful testimony and truly appreciate it.  
4 Thank you so much.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And we just also want to for  
6 the record, recognize that Council Member Conergy has  
7 also been with us.

8 Next, we have Molly Bruhn.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, it looks like she may  
11 have dropped off, so we will turn to Jane Maisel.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

13 JANE MAISEL: Good afternoon, can you hear me?

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, go ahead.

15 JANE MAISEL: Thank you for this opportunity to  
16 speak with you. I am honored to work with the MORE  
17 Health Justice caucus and I teach at the School of  
18 Education at City College.

19 First, I want to speak out for my graduated  
20 student teachers whose family sacrificed to help them  
21 get New York State teaching license and they are now  
22 barred from working in the DOE schools, getting jobs  
23 there because of the hiring freeze and they are left  
24 working in Charter schools which have no freeze.

1  
2 Maybe you could do something about that. That  
3 would be helpful. We have spent the summer listening  
4 to the Mayor and the UFT's continuous boosterism as  
5 they claim that measures will be put into place to  
6 fix problems in the school buildings. Who are they  
7 kidding? They have not done this work for years on  
8 end. They lack the funding to do it now and lack the  
9 honesty to acknowledge this.

10 I want to give you an example of why we doubt the  
11 Mayor's claims that the schools are safe. The other  
12 day a custodian explained that he is being told to  
13 fill out paper work to hide problems. The teacher he  
14 spoke with works in a classroom where the windows do  
15 not open and the custodian does not have the capacity  
16 or equipment to fix the windows. He has been told to  
17 record on paperwork that the window is sticky, not  
18 broken and that it is unable to be opened.

19 Someone from above is telling custodians to fudge  
20 the data and make all look good. This breach of  
21 trust is the result of pressure from above and needs  
22 to be looked into. As people have pointed out,  
23 without required rapid testing and tracing, COVID  
24 will be prolonged by the reopening at this time and  
25 the longer the pandemic lasts, the harder it will be

1  
2 on all of us and by far, will be hardest on Black and  
3 Brown families.

4 Black Lives Matter in the schools. The Mayor and  
5 the UFT's plan makes no sense to teachers. Schools  
6 are not hospitals. Teachers are not doctors. Our  
7 work is different. Learning in school requires  
8 students to move to interact and to collaborate.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

10 JANE MAISEL: Otherwise, why do they need to be  
11 there? In-person learning during COVID will not  
12 allow the teachers to do their job and not allow  
13 children to learn.

14 As a parent, listening to Sharmilee Ramudit,  
15 excuse me if I am pronouncing it wrong, have heard  
16 testimony about children with sensory issues was  
17 particularly pointing for me, as our son shares these  
18 issues. As a teacher I would add that all children  
19 need to experience their physical environment.

20 They need to move, to touch, and be comforted at  
21 times. Holding school with the COVID restrictions in  
22 place, is developmentally inappropriate and unhealthy  
23 in every sense and I thank you for this hearing.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and Chair, we  
25 actually have Molly back on the line. Molly, if you

1  
2 could just speak a little louder, we weren't able to  
3 hear you.

4 MOLLY BRUHN: Can you hear me?

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, there we go.

6 MOLLY BRUHN: Great.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

8 MOLLY BRUHN: I am a proud public school teacher  
9 going into my 13<sup>th</sup> year of teaching. I am also the  
10 parent of a Rising 2<sup>nd</sup> grader and I am deeply  
11 troubled by the plans to open our schools even with  
12 the delay that's been announced. There is a reason  
13 that school districts around this country have chosen  
14 to go all remote. There is incredible risk with  
15 sending our students and teachers and other school  
16 workers back into the building and I have found that  
17 this risk is not being discussed enough. Instead, we  
18 are met with lists of plans and protocols, lists of  
19 cleaning supplies, but it all boils down to risk and  
20 it will not be eliminated with the DOE's plans.

21 I know that you as a counselor supporting the  
22 UFT's 50 point plan but I want to know what's on this  
23 plan. Members were not consulted in its creation and  
24 I fear it still leaves room to reopen unsafely.

25 Cuomo says he expects outbreaks in school closures,



1  
2 so do I and so do the medical experts who spoke on  
3 this call. Why can't we push for full remote now?  
4 Quick shutdowns and quarantines will cause even more  
5 trauma for our students, while the DOE is pushing for  
6 trauma informed instruction. Health exemptions to  
7 work from home are only being provided for teachers  
8 individual health issues and family risk is not being  
9 considered. My husband has a serious heart condition  
10 and luckily, very luckily, I had some medical history  
11 that allowed me to stay home as well. However, if I  
12 had been denied, we were exploring one of us taking a  
13 leave of absence and not everyone actually has this  
14 option.

15 We could actually keep everyone safe and provide  
16 childcare for essential workers or those with no  
17 ability to be remote. Let's get everyone into remote  
18 learning. This will also help streamline things for  
19 schools. Currently, they are sorting teachers into  
20 different tracks and we're finding that blended  
21 remote teachers are going to have double the class  
22 size. I got my teaching assignment today and was  
23 told it can change at any moment, as families switch  
24 from blended to remote or remote to blended.

25

1  
2 Children need consistency, not changing teachers  
3 and none of this makes any sense to what kids need.  
4 Children also need access to real learning materials  
5 and there is no clarity around how teachers or  
6 schools may distribute these things. I think that we  
7 should stick with -

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

9 MOLLIE BRUHN: With REC's for childcare until  
10 there are 14 days of no new cases. Public health  
11 must take priority like Ted Leather said earlier.

12 Thank you.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member Rosenthal has  
14 a question.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You are unmuted now.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Great, thank you very  
18 much. I actually was hoping to give a shout out to  
19 Elisa Crespo, if she is still on. Hey Elisa, I just  
20 wanted to let you know that was a great set of  
21 comments that you gave and I really want to thank  
22 you. I know you are doing work in education now and  
23 I want to thank you for your leadership on this. You  
24 clearly know what's going on in your area in the  
25 Bronx and I think that your work has been exemplary.

1  
2 Elisa and I have worked together on a couple of  
3 things and I just think she is amazing. She is an  
4 amazing leader and wanted to make sure that I put  
5 that in the record for you.

6 Thank you for all your hard work.

7 ELISA CRESPO: I appreciate that and as I stated  
8 in my testimony, I don't want to take more time but  
9 I'm particularly concerns about students with IEPs  
10 and English Language learners and what the parents,  
11 immigrant parents are going through. They must be  
12 completely confused and not have any idea of what's  
13 going on in our education system and frankly, it's  
14 unacceptable.

15 So, thank you for that. I appreciate it.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Good, thank you very  
17 much Chair.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member Barron has a  
19 question.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you. I don't  
22 really have a question, I just wanted to offer my  
23 congratulations to the Chair. I think this was a  
24 very, very important hearing and we heard from those  
25 who are intimately involved and many of them raised

1  
2 intricacy and questions that I have not thought about  
3 but they generated a lot of concern and I now have a  
4 real basis of questions to make sure that we get  
5 specific answers.

6 I just want to thank all of the participants for  
7 taking the time to share with us. Thank you so much.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And our final panel is going  
9 to be Lisa Bowstead, Charesh Wald, Marilyn Moore,  
10 Nelson Mar, and Carolyn Eanes. We will start with  
11 Lisa.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

13 LISA BOWSTEAD: Hi, thank you. My name is Lisa  
14 Bowstead. I am a graduate of the New York City  
15 public schools as is my son. I am also a former DOE  
16 Teacher. I love New York City public schools and  
17 that's why I am here.

18 I am concerned about safe ventilations in our  
19 schools. When it gets cold outside, which will be  
20 soon. I keep hearing about inspections of HVAC  
21 systems and making sure windows open. Most of our  
22 school buildings are very old. The vast majority are  
23 over 40 years old. A significant number are over 100  
24 years old. I've worked in several school building, I  
25 have never worked in a room with an HVAC system.

1  
2 To explain my concern, I want to tell you about  
3 three classrooms in which I have worked. In one  
4 school building, in the winter, I would arrive in the  
5 morning to find the room at 95 degrees or warmer. I  
6 would have to open the windows and wait before I  
7 could spend any time in the room but I had to be  
8 careful not to leave the windows open for too long.  
9 The room would get very cold and then the heat  
10 wouldn't kick in again until after 11 o'clock. In  
11 these bigger buildings, the heat is either on for the  
12 whole building or off for the whole building.

13 In another school, my classroom never had enough  
14 heat. We wore coats all winter. The windows could  
15 be opened but it was too cold to ever do so.

16 In yet a third building that I've worked in, the  
17 north side of the building was always too cold. In  
18 the winter, the heat was always on because the north  
19 side of the building was too cold. The south side of  
20 the building where my classroom was, was always too  
21 hot. No rooms were told to open windows but the  
22 streets were too noisy. So, we ran air conditioners  
23 and fans all winter. With COVID-19 blowing air  
24 around is not an option.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

1  
2 LISA BOWSTEAD: One sentence. I keep hearing  
3 about how important it is that windows be opened for  
4 proper ventilation. Is the plan to keep windows open  
5 all winter? How much is this going to cost and how  
6 many of our old boilers in the school buildings are  
7 going to fail under these conditions. Keeping  
8 windows open cannot be the answer to keeping students  
9 safe. Thank you.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and next, we will  
11 hear from Charesh Wald.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

13 CHARESH WALD: Hi, I'm Charesh Wald, but my name  
14 is Ann and my son is a Rising 2<sup>nd</sup> grader at East  
15 Village Community School in District 1. I wanted to  
16 thank the Council for actually hearing the voices of  
17 teachers, parents, and students. I want to  
18 acknowledge the fact that both the Chancellor and the  
19 Mayor are stunningly missing from this conversation  
20 in general and clearly from this Council.

21 I believe their plans are ill advised and I know  
22 this and they know this, which is why they cannot  
23 participate and own open dialogue. I also think it's  
24 quite telling that UFT President Mulgrew who brokered  
25

1  
2 this deal for the delay is no longer on the call but  
3 I digress.

4       These are extraordinary times and we are all  
5 faced with extraordinary decisions. It's reckless  
6 and shameful to cut and threaten further cuts to  
7 public school funding during a pandemic. We have  
8 lost over 23,000 New Yorkers to COVID already and the  
9 city's poorly planned and under resourced opening  
10 plan opens us up to more loss, especially in the  
11 communities already most impacted by COVID-19, where  
12 infection rates are still higher and schools have  
13 less resources to implement safety measures.

14       I believe one of the most honest statements made  
15 on this call is that this is an effort in futility.  
16 We clearly do not have the funds to bolster safety or  
17 equalize inequities, solve filtration issues, and  
18 make a solid and safe plan for kids with IEP's and  
19 special education and expanded REC center program and  
20 outdoor learning for families and parents who need  
21 full time support. And a building of our own robust  
22 remote plan because inevitably, if this is where we  
23 will land, whether it's on September 22<sup>nd</sup> or  
24 September 30<sup>th</sup>. And the need for expanded REC  
25 centers and 100 percent remote learning.

1  
2 So, this is where we start, money. To execute  
3 this with some level of precision because this is a  
4 scenario we can all agree with the experts will  
5 happen. We demand that the Council Members who voted  
6 yes for the city budget cuts in June, to make reverse  
7 course today and stand up and call on the Mayor and  
8 the Governor to tax the rich and fund New York City  
9 schools.

10 If you don't address the too many deal breakers  
11 in the school reopening plans, then we won't send our  
12 children to school because it's just not safe.

13 I think the word of the day is cluster -

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and next we will  
16 hear from Marilyn Moore.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

18 MARILYN MOORE: Hi, my name is Marilyn Moore, I  
19 am a mother of three daughters, school age and I live  
20 in District 17 and I'm on the City Council 41<sup>st</sup>  
21 District. And I'm also a small business owner, DOE  
22 city vendor who is impacted severely by COVID-19 but  
23 my focus is safety, health first profit second.

24 As a mother and a human being, you know, and my  
25 heart is focused on mental health of our marginalized



1  
2 students because it's so quiet but it is extremely  
3 loud in our communities. I speak with social workers  
4 with the people who are like, basic needs like food  
5 and scarcity, that's why I love Councilwoman  
6 Rosenthal for always bringing up food policy and  
7 making that impactful amongst our schools. And right  
8 now, I'm really nervous about the 114,000 homeless  
9 students who don't have access to a bus. Over  
10 200,000 kids with special needs who need busing also  
11 and they don't even have a contract in place and it  
12 is so nerve racking to figure out how does that  
13 impact how these children feel when they don't have  
14 access to basic needs.

15       Basic needs and I really want us to just say  
16 this, too many deal breakers. There are so many  
17 things that are going wrong and we really need to  
18 think about why this needs to be delayed. About  
19 human life first, because that is what the key point  
20 of educating our children is to impact their human  
21 life in their developmental and their growth.

22       So, if that's not being impacted, then what are  
23 we doing and today, as a mother, I just want to send  
24 our love and peace to all the teachers and also our  
25 mothers and parents and fathers because we are humans

1  
2 who are not getting the support that they need. Just  
3 because you have a degree or have a good career  
4 doesn't mean you have all the resources you need  
5 either. We are a team; we are a city that is too  
6 bountiful for us to be suffering the way we are right  
7 now.

8 So, that's what I want to say. Thank you.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and next, we will  
10 hear from Nelson Mar.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

12 NELSON MAR: Good afternoon Chairman Treyger and  
13 Members of the Education Committee. Thank you for  
14 affording my office the opportunity to provide  
15 comments about the Resolution regarding the reopening  
16 of New York City Public Schools.

17 My name is Nelson Mar and I am an Education  
18 Attorney at Bronx Legal Services, which is part of  
19 Legal Services NYC. The largest provider of free  
20 civil and legal services in the United States.

21 I want to first state that Legal Services NYC  
22 believe that school should not reopen until the  
23 health and safety of all members of the school  
24 community are properly ensured and we certainly echo  
25 a lot that has been said in today's hearing. But in

1  
2 addition to that, Legal Services NYC is here today to  
3 remind everyone that it is important to remember that  
4 schools also need to address the emotional and mental  
5 health need of students and staff for reopening and  
6 this was mentioned multiple times during today's  
7 hearing, including comments by Council Member  
8 Rosenthal. This issue cannot be overlooked,  
9 especially in light of two very recently published  
10 studies this week that confirm the pandemic has  
11 worsened the mental health and emotional health of  
12 adults and children with a disproportionate impact on  
13 those with lower incomes with limited access to  
14 social resources. The studies found that over one  
15 quarter of adults are experiencing symptoms of  
16 depression due to the impact of the pandemic.

17 That's more than three times higher than before  
18 the pandemic and these rates far exceed those found  
19 during previous large scale traumas like Hurricane  
20 Katrina and the attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup>.

21 Another study found that in a few months the  
22 pandemic swiftly and substantially worsened mental  
23 health for both parents and children and not  
24 surprisingly, disproportionately impacted children  
25 whose families who are more economically vulnerable.

1 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

2 NELSON MAR: If I could just finish my thought.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yeah, go ahead.

4 NELSON MAR: For anyone working to improve the  
5 supports for student in New York City schools, the  
6 results of these studies are not surprise and they  
7 further confirm the need for greater investment in  
8 practices and services that work to provide an  
9 environment of healing for both students and staff in  
10 New York City public schools.  
11

12 Toward that end, Legal Services NYC along with  
13 community partners in the Bronx healing centered  
14 schools working group, recently published the  
15 community road map to bring healing centered schools  
16 to the Bronx. This framework can provide the  
17 Department of Education essentially that road map to  
18 help every school engage in the whole school  
19 transformation and implement the healing center  
20 practices that are so necessary right now.

21 We encourage the Members of the Education  
22 Committee and the City Council to learn more about  
23 the road map and to support the efforts with which we  
24 are trying to support ourselves. That community  
25 members likely will be pushing for, for these

1  
2 practices to be implemented in their local schools in  
3 the months to come. Because healing is now needed  
4 more than ever given that most families are dealing  
5 with the dual collective trauma of COVID-19 and the  
6 history of anti-Black racism in the United States.

7 Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and next, we will  
9 hear from Carolyn.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

11 CAROLYN EANES: My name is Carolyn Eanes, I am an  
12 English Teacher at a High School in Coney Island. I  
13 am also a member of MORE UFT.

14 Thank you Chair Treyger for hosting this meeting  
15 and for your outspokenness on the issues around safe  
16 reopening. Thank you also Council Member Menchaca  
17 for our on the ground support for educators, school  
18 staff, and public school families here in Brooklyn.  
19 And thank you Senator Jackson for your amazing  
20 advocacy for funding our public schools. I know he  
21 had to leave, but he was here earlier.

22 I am here to speak in support of the Resolution  
23 to delay in-person learning but also to ask that this  
24 Council will push for even more. School buildings  
25 should not open at all until we have fully funded

1 trustworthy plans for health, justice, and safety. I  
2 would like to echo the demands for transparency  
3 around school building inspections. Many of are  
4 being asked to report to schools on Tuesday but my  
5 schools inspection report has not yet been released  
6 and we're hearing me might get it over the weekend.  
7 This is unacceptable and profoundly unprofessional.  
8 Quite frankly, I have no trust in DOE safety  
9 assessments or that the DOE will be able to improve  
10 our school conditions in the next two weeks after  
11 decades of neglect.

12  
13 With that being said, I'm also here to echo the  
14 demands to fully fund our schools. We keep hearing  
15 about how the federal government has failed us and  
16 they have but when will our city leaders demand full  
17 funding from the state? When will our city leaders  
18 really hold Cuomo accountable for eviscerating our  
19 education budget.

20 Senator Jackson's bill 7378 to tax the rich would  
21 actually provide sustainable funding streams to our  
22 schools. The first day of school is just around the  
23 corner. The slight delay that the Mayor announced  
24 earlier this week does nothing to address the gapping  
25 inequities between schools in terms of facilities and

1  
2 resources. It does nothing to address the  
3 catastrophic defunding of our schools that we have  
4 endured for years, even before COVID and the most  
5 recent city budget cuts. It does nothing to address  
6 the fact that COVID positivity rates vary vastly  
7 between neighborhoods.

8 When we look at all of this data and not just the  
9 convenient citywide COVID positivity averages, it  
10 seem inevitable that the virus will -

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

12 CAROLYN EANES: Another public health emergency  
13 citywide once school buildings reopen and so many of  
14 us are traveling between neighborhoods.

15 Thank you for your time. Tax the rich, fund our  
16 schools, Black Lives Matter.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. There are  
18 multiple people that have come in and out of the Zoom  
19 chat today. So, if there is anyone that we have  
20 inadvertently missed and would like to testify, if  
21 you could please use the Zoom raise hand function now  
22 and we will call you in the order that your hand has  
23 been raised.

24 Seeing no hands raised, Chair Treyger, we have  
25 concluded public testimony for this hearing.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I want to thank you Malcom.

I want to thank the entire Council Staff. I think it's important to acknowledge both the Committee Staff, central staff who is helpful and my extraordinary staff that have been working around the clock always but during this pandemic and during this time. Members are nothing without staff and I am very grateful to the extraordinary and intern that we had who helped us as well.

So, I just want to publicly acknowledge their incredible work and their sacrifice even during trying times themselves. This hearing and also to my colleagues who joined us today, all those that came to speak, I felt it was important to still have this hearing today because we scheduled this before the recent announcement, because I still believe it's important to provide a platform for educators, parents, students, and all stakeholders to give them voice. Because there is so much happening each day and so much more information that's needed in priority and I've said that the cost of safely operationalizing plans is very costly but the cost of being honest, it doesn't cost a dime. And that's what folks are asking for. Honesty, transparency,



1  
2 basic accountability, and that's what we're going to  
3 continue to do and as mentioned before, we are under  
4 a mayoral control system but I'm going to continue to  
5 use the platform to be a voice for those who have to  
6 be heard, who must be heard. And to speak for all of  
7 our education families, to speak for those lives that  
8 we've lost, those lives that have been impacted to  
9 our kids who are you know, retraumatized all over  
10 again. They mean a lot to me and we're going to  
11 continue to fight like hell for them and to do  
12 whatever we can to hold ourselves accountable, to  
13 hold the DOE accountable, the Mayor, the Governor,  
14 everyone. Everyone has to be working with a sense of  
15 urgency to give our schools everything they need to  
16 succeed particularly during this trying time.

17       So, I just want to thank everyone who came, who  
18 spoke today. Please continue sending your emails and  
19 if I miss something I will check it over again. And  
20 again, thank you all for being here with us today.  
21 Thanks.

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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date           AUGUST 24 , 2020