

1 BEFORE THE NEW YORK STATE SENATE
2 STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

3 PUBLIC HEARING:

4 TO EXAMINE THE MERITS OF EXTENDING
5 MAYORAL CONTROL OF SCHOOLS IN NEW YORK CITY

7
8 Senate Hearing Room
9 250 Broadway - 19th Floor
10 New York, New York 10017

11
12 May 19, 2016
13 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

14
15 PRESIDING:

16 Senator Carl L. Marcellino
17 Chair

18
19 PRESENT:

20 Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr.

21 Senator Thomas D. Croci

22 Senator Simcha Felder

23 Senator Martin J. Golden

24 Senator Liz Krueger

25 Senator Jose R. Peralta

Senator Bill Perkins

Senator Toby Ann Stavisky

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1 SENATOR MARCELLINO: My name is the
2 Senator Carl Marcellino. I am the Chairman of the
3 Education Committee.

4 We are here for a hearing on mayoral control.
5 This is the second of two hearings.

6 We held one up in Albany. Several groups
7 testified, including the Mayor and the Chancellor.
8 We were very pleased that they were there, and
9 questions were asked, and many were answered, but
10 many were given the answer, that "We don't have the
11 answer at this point, and we will get back to you."

12 For the most part, that has not happened.

13 We have not heard back from the Mayor's
14 Office on most of the questions that were asked and
15 left unanswered at the last hearing.

16 That's a disappointment.

17 I'm sure, and I hope, that those answers will
18 be forthcoming.

19 We have about a dozen questions or so, and
20 there's about ten that are still outstanding.

21 We'll provide a list to the Chancellor so
22 that she can take it back with her, to know that,
23 these questions, we still would like to hear some
24 answers to.

25 Some questions -- answers to questions that

1 appeared in some Senators' offices late yesterday
2 afternoon, which was interesting.

3 But we are missing the Mayor, and he's the
4 chief player, and he's the person in charge, and we
5 would like him to have been here.

6 We understand he's busy.

7 Everybody is.

8 Everybody at this table is busy.

9 We all have things we would -- we could be
10 doing now in our districts, but we are here because
11 this is an important issue.

12 We're talking about the leadership of the
13 largest school system in the state of New York,
14 dealing with approximately 1.1 million children.

15 And that's what this is all about,
16 "children," and that's what I want to stress here.

17 We're asking these questions to find out if
18 the children of the city of New York are being
19 well-served by their educational system; and that's
20 important to us.

21 I taught in the city of New York for
22 20 years, a former schoolteacher at Grover Cleveland
23 High School, long may it wave.

24 And it is -- it was then, and it is now,
25 still a functioning, vibrant school.

1 And I recently visited, with
2 Chancellor Fariña, and we took a little tour of the
3 building. Reminiscent.

4 I was still looking for some of my colleagues
5 that I saw there way back when. But, some of them
6 have retired, some of them are still teaching, some
7 of them moved on to other places.

8 But the educational system, and the process
9 in dealing with the children, is ongoing, and
10 mayoral control is an integral part of that.

11 It's still a relatively new experiment in
12 education. It's not done everywhere.

13 In some cities they're looking at it. And,
14 in fact, in many -- in some cases, are reluctant to
15 take it on, because they're looking at New York and
16 they're seeing what they consider to be a mixed bag
17 of goods.

18 So we're looking for answers today.

19 My colleagues are here with me, and I'm
20 pleased to be joined with:

21 Joe Addabbo -- to my left, Senator Addabbo,
22 Senator Simcha Felder;

23 Senator Marty Golden and Senator Tom Croci.

24 Others will come and go as they can.

25 Hearings are being held, meetings are being held,

1 throughout the day.

2 People will come in later. People will
3 leave.

4 Hopefully, we will get the list.

5 We have several speakers on the list
6 available to us to come, who have volunteered to
7 speak.

8 And our first speaker of the day will be
9 Carmen Fariña.

10 Chancellor Fariña, please, take the
11 microphone.

12 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Sitting next to me
13 is Ursulina Ramirez, chief of staff, and, chief
14 operating officer, new title.

15 Good morning, State Education Committee
16 Chairperson Marcellino, Ranking Minority
17 Leader Latimer; New York City Education Subcommittee
18 Chairman Felder; members of the Senate Education
19 Committee; and all the Senators attending today.

20 SENATOR MARCELLINO: With one correction,
21 Chancellor.

22 Senator Latimer could not be here, so
23 Senator Addabbo is sitting in, in his stead.

24 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Okay, great.
25 Thank you.

1 I'm grateful for the opportunity to testify
2 on the importance of extending mayoral control of
3 New York City schools.

4 I also appreciate how many of you have worked
5 closely with us to bring resources to your specific
6 districts, and I look forward to continuing work
7 together on the issues that are important to all of
8 us.

9 Mayoral control has given the people of
10 New York City a clear person to hold accountable for
11 the performance of their schools, and mayors have
12 responded by giving our school system more attention
13 and resources than ever.

14 Mayoral control has created a stable,
15 practical, efficient system, where we don't have to
16 worry that funding and resources that are there one
17 year will be gone the next.

18 This allows us to conceive of and execute
19 long-term initiatives for supporting our students
20 and schools.

21 It has allowed me to select the best and
22 brightest superintendents to lead our community
23 education districts.

24 Superintendents must now have ten years of
25 pedagogical experience, including at least three as

1 a principal, and must have a record of success in
2 advancing student learning and facilitating
3 community involvement and input in schools.

4 Also, it helps us with hiring and recruitment
5 of people.

6 Across this country, I'm getting resumes all
7 the time, and they want to know that they're
8 applying to a system that has certain goals and
9 certain belief systems.

10 And it's important that that be something
11 that they apply to, and then feel comfortable that
12 they will be supported in.

13 If you notice from my prepared speech, I've
14 cut out a lot of it so we can get to the questions
15 and answers.

16 But perhaps the most --

17 What?

18 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Bless you.

19 [Laughter.]

20 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: I know there's a
21 certain attention span that people have, including
22 me, so I want to make sure that we get to the things
23 that you're most concerned about.

24 Perhaps the most important consideration,
25 though, is whether or not mayoral control has had

1 measurable impacts on student achievement.

2 Anyone in search of proof need to look no
3 further than the fact that, under mayoral control --
4 and this goes back to the Bloomberg years as well --
5 more students than ever are graduating and fewer are
6 dropping out.

7 Last year, the year's (indiscernible) year
8 graduation topped 70 percent, and this also includes
9 many of our English-language learners, as well as
10 special-ed students.

11 And 70 percent is good, but it's certainly
12 not better, and I -- we want to make sure that we
13 continue working on that to at least 80 percent or
14 over.

15 Mayor de Blasio came into office
16 January 2014, with a commitment to provide
17 New Yorkers with free, full-day, high-quality pre-K
18 for all.

19 The beginning of our first school year, we
20 expanded pre-K to more than 53,000.

21 There are more than 68,500 children right now
22 in our pre-K.

23 And I want to be clear that, to me, it's not
24 about the number. It's about the quality.

25 When I visit schools, I look to see: What is

1 happening in these pre-K's that may not have
2 happened before?

3 And, first and foremost, there's a lot of
4 talk going on in our English-language-learner
5 schools that's particularly important.

6 There is at least a minimum of one
7 parent-engagement day per month.

8 There are trained supervisors to work with
9 these teachers so these teachers can develop their
10 craft.

11 And the question I've been asking over and
12 over again is: How is kindergarten better this year
13 because your students were in pre-K last year?

14 And resoundingly from teachers I'm hearing:
15 The kindergarten students have more stamina.
16 They're able to focus. They come in with more
17 language skills.

18 That's the beauty of pre-K.

19 I'm also proud of what we have accomplished
20 for our English-language learners.

21 We created a standalone division for ELLs,
22 and have been actively expanding innovative
23 programs.

24 Last year we created 40 dual-language
25 programs. And this year we're opening 36 new

1 dual-language and bilingual programs.

2 As the daughter of Spanish immigrants, and a
3 former English-language learner myself, I know
4 firsthand that strong education makes all the
5 difference.

6 Currently, there are more than
7 180 dual-language programs in 150 schools throughout
8 New York City, and they are in many languages:
9 French, Haitian-Creole, Polish.

10 Got a request from one the Senators to do
11 Albanian in one of our districts. And if we can
12 find the students and the teachers, why not?

13 Being a multi-lingual person is part of the
14 New York City experience.

15 This is why mayoral control is so important.

16 It allows us to create and rapidly expand
17 citywide solutions to the unique issues our students
18 face.

19 In serving English-language learners and all
20 students, we improve dramatically how the DOE
21 communicates and engages with parents. Partners --
22 parents are partners in everything you do.

23 This year alone, I have done over 100 town
24 hall meetings.

25 We have created meetings with CEC presidents

1 on Saturdays, rather than during the week, so we can
2 pay more attention to major issues.

3 And, also, our parent-engagement office has
4 been increased with personnel so we can have more
5 translations.

6 And this year we have even created a
7 grandparents advisory group, because we're finding
8 in certain parts of the city that grandparents are
9 actually raising the students, and it's really
10 important that we help them hone their skills.

11 We're thinking outside the box with
12 student-led conferences.

13 We've increased our parent attendance at
14 schools by 38 percent this year, and student-led
15 conferences allow students to articulate their
16 academic progress to their families, and they sit at
17 the parent-teacher conference with their parents,
18 often as translators; but more often than that,
19 actually being able to explain in their own words
20 what they need more help in.

21 Recently, I was in a fourth-grade class,
22 where the teacher was explaining to the parent that
23 there are certain days of the week the child doesn't
24 do the homework as well as they should. And the
25 child actually said to the mother: See, I told you,

1 you overprogram me on Wednesdays.

2 And having a child hear what he or she needs
3 to do better, to me, is more important than just a
4 lot of things being said that don't have impact.

5 We cannot be successful without meaningful,
6 sustained parent engagement at a variety of levels.

7 We have added 40 minutes with parent
8 engagement every single week. First four months of
9 this year, attendance increased 38 percent.

10 And thanks to our multilingual Raise Your
11 Hand Campaign, more parents have run for their seats
12 in their local education councils.

13 In 2013, just 729 parents applied.

14 Last year we saw nearly 1,300 parents apply,
15 an increase of 75 percent.

16 We are investing \$23 million more in arts
17 education each year.

18 We now have the highest number of art
19 teachers in a decade, and 22,000 more students
20 across 113 middle and high schools of receiving arts
21 instruction.

22 I want to say about the arts, it's always
23 been very close to me and something I'm passionate
24 about.

25 And this year we also started something

1 called "Teen Thursdays," where all the museums in
2 the city of New York actually host teenagers.

3 And any of you who have lived with a teenager
4 know that hosting teenagers after school in groups
5 of 30 to 60 is not the easiest thing in the world.

6 And many of our cultural institutions
7 had embraced this, to the degree that the
8 Metropolitan Museum has hosted 4,000 teenagers on
9 Fridays, through their museums, mostly studying
10 American history.

11 We have hired 250 new guidance counselors to
12 support students.

13 And we recently created new third-grade
14 gifted-and-talented classes opening next year in
15 only -- in the districts in the city that didn't
16 have them: 7, 12, 16, and 23.

17 And in this development, all districts will
18 have at least one program.

19 These initiatives, and many others like them,
20 came across because of parent and community input,
21 but mayoral control is what made it possible to
22 implement them so quickly.

23 The investment in the arts was made with City
24 money. The expansion of guidance services was made
25 by the City's commitment.

1 Without mayoral control, and the support of
2 this Mayor, these initiatives would not have
3 happened.

4 Mayoral control also allows us to plan more
5 fully and with more confidence for the future.

6 Without mayoral control, it would be nearly
7 impossible for a mayor to lay out a long-term,
8 detailed vision for our schools, such as, Equity and
9 Excellence.

10 Equity and Excellence is a program that
11 I believe totally in.

12 This Saturday we're having a conference at
13 which almost 1,000 school leaders and CEC members
14 will be attending, to see it laid out, in workshops,
15 principal to principal.

16 Universal literacy program places reading
17 coaches and teachers with experience, who will be
18 trained over the summer, in many -- ultimately, in
19 every elementary school right now in four districts
20 in the city.

21 Algebra For All, AP For All, Computer Science
22 For All, seeks to provide students with skills and
23 courses that they need to be successful in today's
24 colleges, but also in the job market of the future.

25 College access for all middle schools will

1 provide students earlier exposure to college; or
2 college access for all high schools, to ensure our
3 students have access to the resources they need to
4 pursue a path to college.

5 Yesterday I attended a college fair in City
6 Councilmember Comrie's district. And I did a survey
7 about how many students there will be the first in
8 their families to go to college.

9 And an overwhelming number, almost
10 60 percent, will be the first.

11 So there are lots of challenges, not only to
12 get into college, but to stay in college, and to
13 make families understand the importance of that.

14 All students, regardless of what type of
15 school they attend, deserve to benefit from the
16 combined knowledge of our supremely talented and
17 gifted teachers.

18 The District-Charter Program will pair
19 district and charter school together, to foster
20 strong relationships and the sharing of best
21 practices.

22 I went to visit a program yesterday that has
23 a strong relation, in Brooklyn, with a middle school
24 and a charter school in the same building, where
25 they're doing reading buddies with each other.

1 We have done strong partnerships also with
2 un-Common-schools network which, now does training
3 for some of our teachers and principals on teacher
4 feedback.

5 We believe that support like this is key to
6 helping our most disadvantaged students thrive.

7 This is the philosophy we've used in our
8 approach towards supporting and improving struggling
9 schools.

10 The Renewal Schools Program, another cohesive
11 citywide program, is only possible because of
12 mayoral control. It focuses on supporting schools
13 and students while providing clear academic
14 benchmarks.

15 It's really important to understand that the
16 commissioner, MaryEllen Elia, has actually been
17 visiting our 27 persistently-struggling schools, and
18 has been impressed by the amount of resources we've
19 put in these schools, the amount of training we're
20 giving these teachers, and, also, by the amount of
21 leadership that we've had to change in some of these
22 schools, to make sure the schools are successful.

23 In these particular schools we have training.

24 We've extended learning time by an hour each
25 day.

1 We've given them very targeted resources.

2 And, also, we ensure that we are visiting
3 them on a regular basis to ensure that the work
4 that's happening is of high level.

5 We have seen real progress.

6 70 percent of renewal schools have increased
7 their graduation rates, up from 50 percent a year
8 ago.

9 We have been able to achieve this, in large
10 part, by working with our partners to ensure that
11 the schools have access to our best principals.

12 We are receiving whatever support they need.

13 The program is also showing success in terms
14 of parent engagement.

15 And something that we are particularly proud
16 of, that they are visiting each other and actually
17 seeing wonderful processes in all the schools.

18 Together we have made remarkable progress,
19 and we have so much work ahead.

20 To continue building on the critical progress
21 we've made, and to confidently plan on a scale
22 that's necessary, I ask you to consider at least a
23 three-year extension of mayoral control.

24 As someone who has proudly dedicated my
25 entire life to education, I know this is necessary

1 for students to thrive.

2 As a veteran of four different New York City
3 public-school systems, I know what works, and what
4 didn't work.

5 I was part of the original centralization
6 model, where you got a number; and based on your
7 number, you got assigned to a school or a
8 principalship regardless of whether you were the
9 right person for that school.

10 I was a superintendent under
11 decentralization, and knew that, sometimes, even
12 appointing a principal to a school took two years
13 because of the politics involved.

14 I was a regional superintendent, which I also
15 understand had some really strong value to it, but,
16 ultimately, maybe not the consistency, because if
17 you were in a school in The Bronx, there was a big
18 difference what was expected of you, from the school
19 perhaps in Brooklyn.

20 On behalf of all our students, parents,
21 families, educators, our city, and it's future,
22 I thank you for the opportunity to testify before
23 you today, and ask you to allow us to continue to do
24 what works.

25

1 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

2 We've been joined by Senator Toby Stavisky,
3 coming to join us.

4 And, let me start off with a multi-part
5 question. I'm going to ask it at once, and perhaps
6 you could address it.

7 Recently in one of the newspapers -- local
8 newspapers, "The New York Post," there was an
9 article which quoted Police Commissioner Bratton,
10 telling the parents of students, to "Pat your kids
11 down before they leave the house because they're
12 picking up weapons in the schools."

13 There's been a twenty -- according to the
14 article, approximately, a 26 percent increase in the
15 amount of weapons found in the schools. And he felt
16 that the parents should be checking the kids before
17 they leave the house.

18 I don't remember, in 20-plus years of
19 teaching, anybody ever saying anything like that
20 before, telling the parent to pat their kids down
21 and check them for weapons as they leave their
22 houses.

23 I think that's a bit much.

24 But if it's true that there has been an
25 increase in the amount of weapons seized, I'd like

1 to know why, and what are we doing about it to stop
2 it?

3 Schools -- I've heard you've been quoted
4 recently, as they're closing a particular school,
5 and you want to close a few more are coming.

6 If we're working so well, how many new -- how
7 many schools are going to be closed? Where are they
8 located? Why are they being closed?

9 These are questions I think that have to be
10 answered, and we'd like some of those answers now,
11 if you can give them.

12 And if not, we'd like to see answers come to
13 us as quickly as possible.

14 We gave you a list of the questions that were
15 not answered in the prior hearing. Those are the
16 ones we consider was most important.

17 There were several others that we just didn't
18 think were that significant to warrant a rehash.

19 But, the list was -- has been provided. We
20 hope that some of those answers can come to us at
21 a -- in a timely way.

22 But I would like the answer to the questions
23 about the school closures; and the potential for
24 violence and weapons in the schools, because that,
25 to me, is extremely significant, protection of the

1 both the students and the staff -- the teaching
2 staff, in the buildings.

3 I don't know that a firing of a principal is
4 going to resolve that problem.

5 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Well, first and
6 foremost, let me take on the school closures.

7 I was certainly here under the prior
8 administration when schools were closed, and, in
9 many cases, not with a lot of community input.

10 We're looking at school closures a little
11 differently.

12 And I'm looking at it from the point of view
13 is: What's too small to succeed?

14 When I came on board, we had almost
15 100 schools that had less than 150 students in them.

16 As you know, you cannot give resources to
17 students in schools that don't have a guidance
18 counselor after-school program.

19 And those numbers don't generate the
20 resources.

21 I will tell you that as a -- you know, having
22 done this all my life, that I know, anything less
23 than 300, or a little bit more, middle schools don't
24 allow you to have the certified teachers, the
25 after-school programs.

1 So, we see looked at school closures from two
2 points of view:

3 Does it make sense, in this particular
4 neighborhood, that there are other equally good or
5 much better schools that these students could be
6 moved to?

7 Which is exactly what we did, to ensure that
8 the students are in a place where they have the
9 resources they need.

10 So school closures this year, we did three
11 school closures, with one, I believe, happening now.
12 And next year, probably not many more than that.

13 But before we close a school: We have
14 community meetings. We visit the schools, we talk
15 to the principals. And in every single case, we
16 also worked with the affiliated unions in terms of,
17 if these are principals who we have another opening
18 for, we move them.

19 But you can't -- we had schools with 67 kids.
20 We had a school with 24 kids.

21 SENATOR MARCELLINO: But why would that be,
22 if there's schools within the immediate area, if
23 these are elementary schools, and most of the
24 parents or the kids who live in the outlying
25 community would be going to that school?

1 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Not necessarily.

2 SENATOR MARCELLINO: They have choice and
3 they're walking with their feet?

4 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Well, partially,
5 but that wasn't the major thing.

6 We had a high school with 40 kids, because
7 they were allowed to stay open and no one was
8 applying there. There was an enrollment issue.

9 In middle schools, we had a lot of schools
10 that were set up around specialty themes, but you
11 had four or five middle schools in the same
12 building, and one school didn't have the resources.

13 So, we're not only closing, we're also
14 merging and consolidating.

15 This year we had 25 schools that we merged
16 and consolidated into 12 schools.

17 Again, lots of neighborhood community input.

18 But the idea was, to increase the resources
19 for the students, and give the students more choice
20 in the curriculum areas.

21 And, again, we visit communities, we give
22 them choices.

23 And one particular middle school that had the
24 67 students, we gave parents a choice of other
25 schools in the neighborhood that they could apply

1 to, to make sure there's no disruption.

2 In the past, what happens is, instead of
3 closures, you do what we call "phase-outs."

4 And "phase-outs" meant that you gave them
5 four years' notice that a school was going to close,
6 and you let the students, over time, leave the
7 building.

8 And that actually was much more problematic
9 because, when teachers got wind of a phase-out, the
10 good teachers, in many cases, ran to open market, to
11 go somewhere else. And, also, a lot of parents lost
12 faith in the school because they knew, over time, it
13 was not going to be there.

14 So I do think closing, and giving parents
15 options, is the right way to go for schools that are
16 too small to succeed.

17 And I think also, with mergers and
18 consolidations, it's how to do two schools together.

19 I'll give you an example of middle schools in
20 The Bronx.

21 There are four schools in the building.

22 Two of them are doing quite well. One not
23 so well. And the reality is, it had, maybe,
24 150 students.

25 There was plenty of capability to stay in the

1 same building and work with one of the other
2 principals, and ensure that those students now,
3 which they didn't before, have full after-school
4 programs, become part of the community school
5 program which is in that building.

6 So, to me, it's all about the kids: What
7 works better for the students?

8 And the mergers and consolidations work.

9 As far as Commissioner Bratton's statement,
10 I was with Commissioner Bratton actually, yesterday?

11 You don't remember.

12 We had a team-up day, where we went to
13 schools around the city, to talk about, you know,
14 NYPD and principals and teachers working better
15 together.

16 I think the one thing he and I agree, that
17 parents have to take some responsibilities.

18 I don't think I would use the expression
19 "tap-down" (sic), but, you know, a lot of the
20 weapons that are coming to schools, particularly in
21 high school, are coming from homes.

22 And if parents have weapons in their homes,
23 keeping them under lock and key, to me, seems like a
24 parent responsibility. And I think that's
25 important.

1 As far as safety is concerned in the
2 schools -- and I visit a lot of schools -- I don't
3 feel our schools are not safe.

4 You always will have a few kids who do
5 something they shouldn't do.

6 But in terms of the weapons that are in our
7 schools, they are generally confiscated quickly.
8 And, again, parents get called in, and then the
9 students have to take responsibility for what
10 they've done.

11 SENATOR MARCELLINO: What happens to a kid
12 who has a weapon?

13 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Well, it depends
14 on the issue and the type of weapon.

15 They're suspended, and there's a whole
16 process that has to be done.

17 And then, of course, the parents are always
18 called, and some kind of a repercussion takes place.

19 It depends on the school's particular issue,
20 and what the child did with the weapon. Or, in some
21 cases, didn't do anything; was just caught through
22 the scanning process.

23 SENATOR MARCELLINO: I notice we've been
24 joined by Senator Peralta, and Senator Perkins also.

25 Thank you for coming.

1 All right I will pass the baton on to a --
2 Senator Addabbo.

3 SENATOR ADDABBO: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

4 First, let me thank you and your staff for
5 organizing this hearing today.

6 And I do appreciate when you say that the
7 focus is about the children and the system.

8 And I totally agree, it should always be
9 about the children and the system or the structure.

10 So, Chancellor, thank you very much for being
11 here today as well.

12 And if we can focus on the system or the
13 structure, because, back in 2002, when I was in the
14 city council, and Mayor Bloomberg at the time had
15 this idea about mayoral control, I actually thought
16 it was problematic about the name being called
17 "mayoral control," because, if you think about it,
18 when we do our streets, it's not mayoral control of
19 our streets or roadways. It's Department of
20 Transportation.

21 And so the mayor's control over our schools
22 should be considered the Department of Education,
23 not mayoral control.

24 Actually, it should be local government of
25 schools, or local control.

1 So that being said, let's take the
2 consideration, a hypothetical, that if the State
3 Legislature did not do anything, if it was to lapse
4 come June, and we no longer have the Department of
5 Ed or mayoral control, government control of our
6 schools, talk us through what you think would be the
7 ramifications for our children if we were to go back
8 to the old Board of Ed or some other structure.

9 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: I would say it's
10 probably going to be a nightmare, but I'll try to
11 temper that a little bit.

12 I think the -- who makes ultimate decisions,
13 you need someone to be accountable. And you need
14 someone -- and to some degree, you know, it's
15 happening already.

16 Who do you point a finger at?

17 People don't call when you're doing a good
18 job and say, Thank you very much.

19 But I do think it's important to say, okay,
20 this is the person that I'm holding accountable.
21 These are the things they've said publicly they're
22 going to stand for, and tick off the boxes as they
23 do it.

24 We said we were going to do pre-K.

25 We said we were going to do middle school

1 after-school.

2 We said we were going to do a higher rate of
3 high school graduates.

4 Those are all things we put on our agenda to
5 get done, and that's what I believe we have
6 accomplished.

7 I think, for me personally, in terms of being
8 a chancellor, it means -- and I don't even know what
9 the legality would be if we go back to a board -- it
10 means you have to convince X number of people to
11 vote, and have a unanimous vote, or a majority vote,
12 on the issues you want to do; which, to some degree
13 is going to necessarily slow us up on some of the
14 things we want to do.

15 I remember as a school-board member --
16 I mean, a superintendent, and, actually,
17 Mayor de Blasio was on my school board, that I had
18 to meet with every member of the school board,
19 one-on-one, to convince them about some of the
20 things that we wanted to do. And it took, maybe,
21 three or four months, and then, ultimately, nobody
22 would agree with anybody, so we didn't get some of
23 these things done.

24 So, to me, I do think it's going to slow the
25 process.

1 I do think that the satisfaction of
2 principals and teachers, overall, in the city is
3 high. This is the highest it's ever been. We've
4 done our own internal surveys.

5 And having people who are satisfied with
6 their profession and working hard at what they do,
7 I think is crucial.

8 I think the other thing we've done
9 differently now than we did before, is that we have
10 a lot more support, where local officials and
11 parents have access to superintendents.

12 You know, one of the things that's different
13 now than it was in 2002, the hierarchy is very
14 clear.

15 It's the mayor.

16 Then it's me.

17 Then it's my superintendents.

18 And we now have 44 superintendents who have a
19 geographical neighborhood, so many of you already
20 know who your superintendents are. You know who you
21 can call if there's an issue.

22 Those superintendents have all these
23 principals accountable for them, and all of them are
24 educators, which was not necessarily true in the
25 past.

1 So I think we have a system that holds
2 accountability, that has stability, and, that's
3 evaluated.

4 I evaluate all my superintendents on several
5 things.

6 One: How much they've engaged parents in
7 their decision-making.

8 How much they've evaluated principals to make
9 sure principals are doing the right job.

10 I'm just finishing by one-on-one interview
11 with every single superintendent that works for me,
12 and I've asked them: What's working? What's not
13 working? What would you like to see changed a
14 little bit? And then, also, what are you proudest
15 of?

16 Those are the questions every one of them has
17 to answer.

18 And, if they're not mentioning parent
19 engagement in some form or another, then I worry.

20 And if they're not talking about professional
21 development, which really did not exist a lot in the
22 past, I don't feel we're moving in the right
23 direction.

24 SENATOR ADDABBO: Just in this hypothetical
25 other structure, should mayoral control expire, is

1 it your understanding that this new structure comes
2 about this September of 2016? Does it come about
3 mid-year, starting January 2017?

4 What is your understanding about, possibly, a
5 new structure for our children?

6 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Well, the mayoral
7 control ends at the end of this June, so I'm
8 assuming, unless there's another away around it,
9 that July 1st.

10 And keep in mind, that even under Bloomberg,
11 you had a month in that -- at one time, where there
12 was a time -- well, it turned out being temporary,
13 but nobody knew it at the time, and you had people,
14 I guess, from the borough president's office
15 representing, but no decisions were generally made
16 at that time, because it was like a standstill kind
17 of clock.

18 And that's -- you know, I have a sense of
19 urgency around this job.

20 I did not come to do this job, at this stage
21 in my life, where I want to take things slowly,
22 unless it's something, obviously, that requires some
23 legal looking into.

24 I want to make sure that every child in
25 New York City is getting the education that is going

1 to make them the citizens of tomorrow.

2 So, to have anything that stops us from doing
3 the work, I would find very detrimental.

4 SENATOR ADDABBO: It has been mentioned that
5 the mayor is not here today.

6 We have about 12 --

7 SENATOR MARCELLINO: If he is here, could he
8 raise his hand?

9 [Laughter.]

10 SENATOR ADDABBO: He might have come in.

11 We have about 12 session days left up in
12 Albany. Of course, we can call special session, and
13 all that stuff.

14 But let's say we're working with the
15 12 calendar session days.

16 What is your strategy over those next 12 days
17 or so, with the Mayor, coming back to Albany,
18 answering questions, having meetings?

19 What is the strategy for the Mayor to
20 convince the State Senate that mayoral control
21 should be extended?

22 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: To do my job as
23 best as I can, day after day.

24 I have been to Albany many times this year.
25 I have met many of you, one-on-one.

1 I have, now, meetings for the next month,
2 one-on-one, with a lot of our city council members.

3 My job is to stay focused on the kids, and
4 what they need to do in their classrooms.

5 I have a saying, "The answer is always in the
6 classroom."

7 But I do think that, by listening to
8 constituents -- and, again, elected officials being
9 constituents -- I think it's really important to
10 say, Well, what's working for you; what's not?

11 So my job is to do what I know is -- I know
12 best to do, which is educating kids.

13 SENATOR ADDABBO: I do, we do, appreciate
14 your dedication to our children; and, again, I want
15 to say thank you.

16 I guess part of that question was: Does the
17 Mayor plan on coming back to Albany for these
18 meetings, for these negotiations, for these, again,
19 private meetings, with leadership?

20 But does he plan on coming back to Albany.

21 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Well, again, the
22 Mayor was there for over four hours, as I was,
23 sitting next to him.

24 After those four hours, we then met with the
25 Assembly, which over 100 people were in that

1 particular room.

2 Then we met with individual interest groups
3 that asked to meet with us.

4 So we were there an entire day. And I, from
5 6:00 in the morning till almost 5:00 that afternoon.

6 Any Senator, or even city council member,
7 who's asked for private meetings with me has
8 received them.

9 And, I've met with caucuses.

10 We went out for the Black and Latino caucuses
11 as well.

12 So, I do think we've made ourselves extremely
13 accessible.

14 And I -- in terms of his particular schedule,
15 I do not want to answer for him.

16 But like I said, for me, my job is to work in
17 the city, with the schools, and the leaders of the
18 schools, as much as I can.

19 SENATOR ADDABBO: And the last question --
20 I may have others, but I do want my colleagues to
21 have an opportunity to speak to you -- with the
22 expiration of practically anything, we have the
23 opportunity to improve.

24 That gives us this opportunity to have this
25 kind of conversation, and, hopefully, improve the

1 structure for our children, educationally.

2 Now, Tuesday -- late Tuesday evening, the
3 Assembly voted for a straight extender.

4 In your opinion, in talking about the
5 opportunity to improve, do you think there's this
6 opportunity, instead of just a straight extender, to
7 I make these improvements, for parents', you know,
8 input, relevancy of the CECs or PEP or
9 administrators and teachers?

10 We have this opportunity to improve our
11 current structure, all for the sake of our children.

12 Do you see, not only this opportunity for
13 improvement, but maybe what improvements might you
14 even suggest?

15 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Well, I think
16 we've put in a lot of the improvements, only from
17 the last time I was here, to now.

18 And in terms of parent engagement, which
19 I guess is one of the things you're asking, when
20 I first came on board, I remember the CECs being,
21 to some degree -- they just met; and some came, and
22 some didn't come.

23 So moving the CEC presidents to Saturday
24 meetings, and also giving them specific
25 responsibilities. One of the things I've asked them

1 to think about this year is enrollment improvements
2 that we needed to do, because we have structures in
3 place. It's how they're used that matter.

4 I think, also, with the CECs, we asked them
5 to start looking at diversity issues, which I know
6 is something that's very close to both the Mayor and
7 I, and -- but without any mandates.

8 So, for example, you have a CEC president,
9 District 13, David Goldsmith, who has done an
10 unbelievable job of getting the people in his
11 community to talk about what should this look like,
12 and how does it look like in our community? Because
13 there's a community-based decision-making.

14 And for any of you who have been following
15 the press, I sat on the PEP under prior
16 administrations, and you knew what the foregone
17 conclusion was going to be on any vote, because it
18 was, very much, everybody did what they were told.

19 And I'm not saying it's bad or good. I'm
20 just saying, that's what happened.

21 We go to our PEP meetings, after having spent
22 hours of discussion, after having the PEP members
23 going and visiting the schools that are on the
24 agenda, and we change our mind occasionally, based
25 on parent input.

1 So I do think the system is there.

2 I just don't think all the structures may
3 have been utilized to the degree they should have
4 been.

5 I inherited a parents' department that was
6 really more a proforma.

7 And the one of the things we asked
8 Yolanda Torres, who's the head of the
9 parent-engagement office, is to go out in the
10 community and ask different communities: What do
11 they want more of?

12 And based on what they've told us, they want
13 more English classes, they want GED classes, they
14 want cooking classes, they want -- it's going to
15 depend on what they tell us they want, rather than
16 us telling them what they need. And I think that's
17 a major shift.

18 So the structures were there. They might not
19 have been utilized as much as they could have been.

20 We put out publications now on a monthly
21 basis, for new teachers, for parents, for
22 principals.

23 A lot of our communication strategies is
24 letting people know in as many ways as possible.

25 And, actually, with our P-Notes, which is

1 actually going out today, we've put them out to
2 everybody.

3 CEC presidents, city council members; anyone
4 who wants a copy of what's at least on my mind, gets
5 it every single month.

6 So, I do think our communication and our work
7 with parents has been really strong, and we'll
8 continue to get even stronger.

9 And we always listen to recommendations from
10 elected officials.

11 SENATOR ADDABBO: Again, Chancellor, I thank
12 you so much.

13 And I just encourage you, as you have these
14 conversations up in Albany regarding the extension,
15 to give us that kind of input on what we can
16 possibly do to improve the current structure to,
17 again, increase the roles of, again, certain
18 interests in education.

19 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: I would say the
20 one thing is, that I am going to come back,
21 certainly to the State Legislature, on several
22 issues, which are legal issues, that we could use
23 more help with.

24 And I've discussed this with the
25 State Commissioner.

1 We need help in terms of our CTE programs.

2 We want to increase our CTE programs, and a
3 lot of the reasons we can't --

4 (The lights go out.)

5 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Okay.

6 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Can we stay away from
7 the light switches in the back, please.

8 It's a little annoying.

9 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: -- and a lot of
10 the legislation, and I think that's the role you
11 guys play that's very important, requires changes.

12 We can't get teachers for our pharmacy
13 program, we can't get teachers for our health
14 programs, because there are certain things in state
15 stature (sic) that keep this from happening in an
16 easy way.

17 So, definitely, that's a role that all of you
18 can play.

19 One of the things I'm concerned about there
20 are -- some of our major shortage areas are, for our
21 dual-language expansion, is teachers who teach
22 another language.

23 And I have a lot of teachers who want to
24 teach in New York City, but they don't have
25 reciprocal licensing.

1 So if you're teaching in Texas, which is
2 where I'm getting a lot of requests from, there's a
3 surplus of dual-language teachers, but they can't
4 teach in New York City because of their licenses.

5 So there's a lot of things that we can sit
6 down together and say, as partners: What could we
7 do better to make some of the things that are, you
8 know, actually stumbling blocks to our work?

9 SENATOR ADDABBO: Thank you.

10 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

11 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Just so everybody knows,
12 and put in it perspective, the State contribution to
13 the educational system in the city of New York is
14 \$9 billion. We're not talking about small change
15 here.

16 So when we discuss what's going on, we have
17 an oversight responsibility, which we will adhere to
18 and we will put forth.

19 So, I am pleased that our members -- the list
20 that I have established right now is:

21 Senator Croci, Senator Golden, Senator Peralta,
22 Senator Stavisky, and Senator Perkins.

23 That's it.

24 And Senator Felder, obviously, we'll fit in.

25 I'm going to go left to right. Whichever

1 order, we'll get --

2 SENATOR PERKINS: (Indiscernible.)

3 SENATOR MARCELLINO: -- we'll get to
4 everybody.

5 SENATOR STAVISKY: (Indiscernible.) You're
6 in the middle, right.

7 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Everybody will get a
8 fair shot and a fair chance to ask questions, and we
9 have other panels to go. So if we can keep our
10 questions concise, and if can keep our answers as
11 tight as we can, then we have a chance of getting
12 out of here before midnight.

13 Senator Croci.

14 SENATOR CROCI: Well, thank you,
15 Mr. Chairman.

16 And thank you, Senator Golden, for allowing
17 me to jump ahead, as I'm going to have to leave
18 early.

19 But, Chancellor, I appreciate your appearance
20 here today.

21 I want to dovetail off of something that you
22 raised, and then something the Chairman raised
23 initially.

24 First, as a former chief executive of a
25 small -- the third largest town in the state of

1 New York, when there was an initiative important to
2 the residents of my town, and in my role as chief
3 executive, if the Legislators in Albany wanted to
4 discuss policy with me, I got in the car and I drove
5 to Albany.

6 If they wanted me to come back, I got in the
7 car and drove back to Albany.

8 I checked ego at the door, particularly when
9 it came to the welfare of the children and the
10 families of our community.

11 So I would just say that, in this case, we
12 are talking about, as you have raised, and,
13 certainly, your focus is on the families and the
14 children that we're talking about, it's worth the
15 chief executive coming out and appearing.

16 It's an indication to the Legislature about
17 the importance of the issue to the chief executive.

18 And something that the Chairman raised was
19 the security.

20 Of the 32 persistently dangerous schools in
21 the state of New York, as rated by State Ed, 27 them
22 are in New York City.

23 And, so, when I hear about young kids
24 being -- being -- arming themselves with weapons on
25 their way to school, it's because, it's not just

1 they're afraid of something in the school. It's
2 from their house/from their home to the school,
3 there is an issue; and inside the school, there is
4 an issue.

5 It's not a spontaneous action that a kid
6 decides to arm themselves.

7 So I'm concerned about some of the security
8 questions that have been raised, and I was wondering
9 what the school system intends to do, or the City
10 intends to do, to ensure that, from that young
11 person's home to the school, on the streets, that
12 they feel safe; and then once they're inside that
13 school, they feel safe.

14 Because the parents' expectation is, when
15 they give their children to the school system and
16 they enter that doorway, that they are safe and in
17 an environment conducive to education.

18 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: I want to be very
19 clear that, at this moment, the State and the City
20 do not use the same template to give us safety
21 statistics.

22 And, actually, the Commissioner and I have
23 been talking about how do we equalize that, so when
24 we use numbers, we're both using the same set of
25 numbers?

1 Crime has gone down in New York City schools
2 almost 29 percent.

3 And I will tell you again, I visit schools
4 all the time. And I particularly have visited most
5 of the persistently dangerous schools personally.

6 And one of the schools on that list is
7 actually one of our gifted-and-talented schools.

8 So I want to be clear that, sometimes, it's
9 the incident itself that -- because incidents have
10 point systems. And what the point system will bring
11 up is, sometimes, for one student and one incident,
12 it increases the number.

13 So we have to be very honest about what --
14 how we evaluate these schools, and how do -- what
15 constitutes a crime?

16 Having said that, even one incident is one
17 incident too many.

18 One of the things we've instituted also, with
19 the NYPD, because a lot of these incidents,
20 unfortunately, happen on the way to school/on the
21 way home, we started increasing what we call "safe
22 corridors."

23 There are many schools in our city that we
24 know are in particularly unsafe neighborhoods.

25 So we now have a system where, at dismissal

1 time, there are extra safety officers and police
2 department personnel, to actually have students,
3 when they walk what they call the "safe corridor,"
4 watched.

5 If we have incidents -- and I'm thinking of
6 one in particular that we just saw about two weeks
7 ago, where there were some gangs in two rival -- in
8 two schools. And gang activity is one of the issues
9 that raises the safety concerns in neighborhoods.

10 We now have a special unit that we work with,
11 with NYPD, just to put in those neighborhoods.

12 We have increased school safety agents in
13 some schools, but, more importantly, I think, we're
14 starting retraining school safety officers.

15 How do you de-escalate issues?

16 How do you anticipate an issue even before it
17 happens? Which is possible.

18 So I do think our schools are safe.

19 I certainly go into schools all by myself.

20 People also always shocked. I walk in the
21 building, all by myself. Where's my entourage?

22 I don't take an entourage.

23 I really feel that our public schools are as
24 safe as they can be, but always -- there's always
25 room for improvement.

1 SENATOR CROCI: Thank you.

2 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Senator Golden.

3 SENATOR GOLDEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4 Thank you, Chancellor, for being here today,
5 and thank you for the good work that you do in the
6 school system.

7 It's a difficult school system, but some of
8 the questions I asked the last time are going to be
9 very similar to the questions I'm going to ask
10 today, so there will be few surprises here.

11 I still believe you have to be an MIT
12 graduate to traverse your computer system and your
13 technology system in trying to look up schools.

14 What money goes into the schools?

15 How that money is divided?

16 How much money a student gets in each one of
17 these schools?

18 How much money goes into the construction
19 projects?

20 What are the overruns on the construction
21 projects?

22 And why is there more of a focus on these
23 overruns -- overriding these projects?

24 And one I'm going to go specifically is going
25 to be PS 201 in Brooklyn.

1 I noted that Mr. (indiscernible) and
2 Mr. Gonzalez are doing their best.

3 I mean, it's two and a half years, and we're
4 going into a third year, for reconstruction. You
5 could have built the school by the time we finish
6 renovating this school.

7 There was a revolution going on in my
8 community over this.

9 And I have to find out, you know -- how do
10 I find out when this is going to end?

11 What does this actually cost us?

12 And how would I find that in the computer?

13 And how can you help me on that?

14 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Well, that is a
15 challenge.

16 And, certainly, if you want to ask me, what
17 is one of the challenges that I haven't really
18 solved yet? that is definitely one of them.

19 Our website leaves a lot to be desired,
20 certainly, for this century, and it's something
21 we're working on.

22 I would say, also, we are very transparent,
23 but getting the information is not as easy as the
24 transparency once you dig it up.

25 One of things that I think that I can

1 honestly say is that, this year, we're working with
2 my financial officer, and the Mayor, no school will
3 be budgeted at less than 87 percent of fair-student
4 funding. That's across the board throughout the
5 city.

6 Our lowest right now is at 82 percent.

7 No school will be less than 87.

8 And our hope is that, within a year, all
9 schools will be at least at 90 percent.

10 So that's one of the things in terms of
11 getting services.

12 The other thing is, in terms of -- and you're
13 certainly one of the most overcrowded districts --
14 where do we find space?

15 And thanks to many of the elected officials
16 and parents and everybody, real-estate agents, we
17 are really looking for space that we can either
18 lease or build.

19 And one of the thing we're looking at in your
20 particular district, is how do you convince parents
21 to cross the other side of Third Avenue, which is a
22 problem?

23 We know where we have the space, but parents
24 don't necessarily want to go to those spaces.

25 And the other big issue that we have, and

1 this is true in your district, and it's true,
2 certainly, in areas of Queens and some parts of
3 The Bronx, where we have TCUs.

4 We have several schools that we wanted to
5 move. But in order for us --

6 SENATOR MARCELLINO: What's a "TCU"?

7 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: The temporary care
8 units. The --

9 URSULINA RAMIREZ: The trailers.

10 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: -- it's the
11 trailers.

12 And a lot of people don't want the trailers,
13 but if we're going to get rid of the trailers, we
14 have to place the kids temporarily someplace while
15 we build, because a lot of our schools have very
16 large schoolyards and we can build schools there.

17 I'm going through a situation right now in
18 Brooklyn, but where do you put the kids meantime?

19 So, there's a lot of things, but in terms of
20 specific numbers for specific schools, this is still
21 a work in progress.

22 SENATOR GOLDEN: Those trailers, we
23 definitely don't want to go back with. Kids were
24 falling through the floors on these trailers.

25 These trailers were a disaster. They should

1 not be in existence at all. And whatever we can do
2 to get kids out of trailers, we have to do that.

3 Now, I'm one of the -- this may be an
4 old-school approach, but the "if you build it, they
5 will come."

6 So I do believe that you have to build them.

7 I don't care where you build them. You have
8 to build them, and you have to build them with
9 STEAM, and you have to build them with STREAM,
10 programs.

11 You have to be able to give the kids of the
12 future the opportunity to stay, live, and raise
13 their families here, and we don't have enough for
14 that.

15 And I don't see that in any plan, and that's
16 sort of a real serious problem.

17 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: I totally agree
18 with you, and that's something we're working on.

19 We have buildings that are over 100 years
20 old, that just to put wiring in them for air
21 conditioning is a monumental job because they don't
22 of the capacity for wiring.

23 So, this is not something I'm going to tell
24 you we are greatly successful at, but it's certainly
25 something we're working on.

1 I was in one of your schools this week, and
2 the principal wants more outlets, so -- because
3 they're not used to -- when the school was built, it
4 was not built for the technology of today.

5 So that is part of the work with, you know,
6 Computer Science For All. We want to make sure that
7 we put the support services in schools that we need
8 to get that done.

9 SENATOR GOLDEN: If you could bring one of
10 our kids in from the schools, they can build a
11 better tech program so we can easily access that
12 program, so we can break it down by district, by
13 school, by account, what money is going into that
14 school, what programs they have.

15 I think we got some of the best kids in the
16 entire country going to our schools, so I do
17 believe --

18 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Oh, I love that
19 idea.

20 SENATOR GOLDEN: -- there's no reason for
21 this not to happen. This is the twenty-first
22 century, we should do that.

23 Moving along: overcrowding.

24 I sat with the administration years ago --
25 14 years ago, and they told me, What do I got to do

1 to reduce the overcrowding?

2 We did it.

3 I put 8,000 new classrooms sites in
4 District 20.

5 Guess what?

6 We went to a meeting, most overcrowded school
7 district? District 20.

8 It's -- it's -- I just can't -- where is
9 there a plan for emerging communities -- emerging
10 new immigrant -- emergent communities coming in?

11 And what is our plan as a city to deal with
12 them, in education, transportation, but not so
13 much -- your goal is education -- just the education
14 portion of it?

15 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: I think this is
16 one of the places, very honestly, that having a
17 committee of people from the electeds and people
18 from school construction and us and some educators
19 and some superintendents at the table, particularly
20 the three most overcrowded districts, 20, 24, parts
21 of 10, and having a real discussion, because this is
22 a very big problem, and no one person is going to
23 solve it.

24 The other thing is, and because this is
25 something, I now drive around the city, wherever

1 I see high-risers, to try to figure out, are they
2 one-bedroom? two-bedroom? three-bedrooms? because,
3 well, that kind of tells you, there are going to be
4 children.

5 Because, although Williamsburg group,
6 dramatically, in Brooklyn, a lot of them are
7 one-bedrooms, so you can kind of say, well, maybe
8 there are going to be singles.

9 But the other piece of this is, that the
10 explosion of newly-arrived immigrants in certain
11 parts of the city was totally unexpected, and, many
12 times, they're not reported.

13 So it's like, in your district in particular,
14 there are apartments that you pass by, or houses,
15 you assume one- or two-family houses, where, in
16 reality, maybe six families are living in those.

17 So we have to get smarter of how do we count
18 these families?

19 And many of these are the families that don't
20 report who they are to any authority --

21 SENATOR GOLDEN: We have illegal conversions
22 going on in my community, where you take a one- or
23 two-family home and you turn it into five or six
24 families. And that's going on.

25 The City knows this.

1 We all know this.

2 So what we have to be able to do is come
3 together, as a unit, as a city, with the Building
4 Department, with the City Education Department, with
5 Transportation, PD, FD, and, believe it or not, our
6 hospitals which are impacted as well, to make sure
7 that we get the best services for the people coming
8 into our community.

9 I don't want to stop anybody.

10 I want to make sure it's done and planned
11 correctly, to make sure that we do the right thing,
12 and that the people that live here deserve the
13 housing, get the housing, and get the best education
14 they can possibly get.

15 And we are really -- you're doing an
16 excellent job educating, but, unfortunately, we're
17 losing a tremendous number of our kids to
18 out-of-state.

19 We're losing them to Texas, to California.

20 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: North Carolina and
21 Pennsylvania, the two biggest states.

22 SENATOR GOLDEN: Pardon me?

23 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: North Carolina and
24 Pennsylvania, two of the biggest states where we're
25 losing to.

1 SENATOR GOLDEN: So that's -- and the other
2 issue that -- is the pre-K's.

3 Obviously, we enter them into pre-K and --
4 which is the smartest thing, great idea; very costly
5 idea.

6 We got -- you couldn't figure out that
7 money -- if I asked you to sit down here, we could
8 sit here for ten hours and we couldn't figure out
9 where that money came from, and how that money's
10 being paid back.

11 Now, that's number one.

12 How many kids got to get into the system?
13 That's another issue.

14 And how many kids are left out of the system?

15 And how many kids are being moved around
16 through the shelters into different communities,
17 that are also impacting those communities?

18 What is lo -- co-locations doing to the
19 overcrowding?

20 And how are we making sure that charter
21 schools are not hurt by this?

22 Is that a lot of questions in one question?

23 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: It is, but let me
24 try to take one at a time, and maybe, you know,
25 Ursulina Ramirez can answer (indiscernible).

1 First of all, one of the things that I think
2 would be helpful for everybody to work together, and
3 we started doing in a small way, is that new
4 developers always ask for some kind of easement
5 rights.

6 If you're going to go up higher, what can you
7 do?

8 I think they should do early childhood
9 centers in their buildings. Having pre-K's in
10 buildings that are going up, a win-win for most
11 developers.

12 And I'm thinking of one we've done
13 particularly well, I think in DUMBO, where the
14 developer is actually giving us pre-K sites, so that
15 means those local public schools don't have it. And
16 I think they should be giving us space for schools.

17 There are some in Queens that are doing this
18 already, but maybe this could be part of the overall
19 plan to do this.

20 I think having -- you have to look at the
21 expenditure on pre-K, two ways.

22 I see the expenditure on pre-K as an
23 investment.

24 If you have an extra year of school, and
25 particularly our students who go -- start school,

1 not speaking English, and they are able to go to
2 kindergarten with much more skills under their belt,
3 the system and the city is going to be better off in
4 the long run.

5 I think in terms of the co-locations, I have
6 the saying, "There are lessons learned."

7 And one of the things that, actually, we've
8 been discussing, is how do we get a much more
9 focused approach to co-locations where everyone is
10 well-served?

11 Like I said, I went yesterday to a site, a
12 success academy, Ancephalo (ph.) Middle School --

13 SENATOR GOLDEN: That's my district.

14 There's tens of thousands of kids on lists,
15 waiting to get into these schools, and they can't
16 get into them.

17 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: But, again, it's
18 how -- what are the things that are in common that
19 the schools could share?

20 Where are these things, like after-school
21 programs, and things like that, that actually make
22 sense?

23 But I think the other piece of this is, also,
24 in co-locations, does it make sense to put three
25 middle schools in the same building, or three

1 high schools, that they can share resources?

2 AP For All doesn't mean every single school
3 has to have five AP courses.

4 But if you have five high schools, and I just
5 said this in The Bronx, and I said to each of the
6 high schools:

7 You have a history class, you have an English
8 class, you have a math class.

9 How do you then parallel teaching beyond the
10 same bell schedule -- which is, somehow or other,
11 it's a horrific idea for many people -- so that you
12 can actually go into each other's classrooms and
13 take classes in other classrooms?

14 After-school programs, if you unify all the
15 after-school programs, kids have more choices.

16 So, I think we need to talk a lot more, and
17 I think co-locations is one of the issues. We
18 really want to have more discussions with
19 communities on: What makes sense? What doesn't
20 make sense? What is an underutilized building
21 versus overutilized building?

22 Because the Blue Book from the past wasn't
23 working, and we now have a new way of looking at
24 space. But we need -- that really, probably, could
25 use a little bit more refinement.

1 URSULINA RAMIREZ: And, Senator, I just
2 wanted to quickly answer, you made a comment about
3 new capacity within your district.

4 And last night, just so you know, the Panel
5 for Educational Policy had voted on the amended
6 capital plan, with \$800 million in "new seat"
7 investments, including some in your district.

8 Because we have heard from community members
9 about the growing -- the growth of different
10 neighborhoods, whether that's from developments, or
11 from students living in temporary housing elsewhere.

12 So we have made investments, and specifically
13 to --

14 SENATOR GOLDEN: I thank you on one issue.
15 (Indiscernible) on Manhattan Beach, which I think
16 was very good.

17 I have three locations at that -- I have a
18 one shelter -- a women's shelter, a men's shelter,
19 and a family shelter. That would have destroyed my
20 school over there, School -- PS 22.

21 And, thank God, you did the right thing
22 there.

23 URSULINA RAMIREZ: And I do want to note that
24 we are -- and we're trying to do -- we're doing a
25 better job of actually working more closely with the

1 Department of Homeless Services, to talk about how
2 we are coordinating and working together.

3 In addition, the Mayor made an investment of
4 \$10 million to really support kids in temporary
5 housing, and the collaboration between the
6 Department of Education and DHS, because we do --

7 SENATOR GOLDEN: Sorry if I'm talking fast
8 and putting out a lot of questions, because a lot of
9 members here want to.

10 And I have -- believe it or not, I have a
11 senior -- several hundred seniors waiting for me at
12 a town hall back in Bay Ridge, so I have to try to
13 get as much out as quickly as I can. And I think
14 it's important for you, the media, for this panel,
15 so the proper decisions are made as we move forward.

16 So, what I need to know is the -- I wish
17 I had some of those schools that had 100 kids in
18 them.

19 I got the -- my middle schools are 2,000
20 kids. My high schools are 4500 and 5,000 kids.

21 You know, so when you break them down into
22 three different academies, I think you're almost
23 forced to break them into three different academies
24 when you have that many kids in a school.

25 Maybe I'm wrong there.

1 And how many -- go ahead.

2 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: No, I mean, one of
3 the schools that I'm particularly proud of in the
4 city is Fort Hamilton High School.

5 SENATOR GOLDEN: Doing an excellent job
6 there. The (indiscernible) program they have
7 there --

8 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: They have
9 5,000 students; but, yet, she has an assistant
10 principal in charge of each academy in that
11 building.

12 They were one of the first schools I invited
13 to go see Hamilton, because of the work they do, not
14 only in the academics, but in the arts.

15 So I think each school has to be evaluated on
16 it's difference: is it working? isn't working?

17 Large was -- I mean, I -- like I said, it was
18 too small.

19 I believe in small high schools, but they
20 have to be the right small schools serving the right
21 purposes.

22 SENATOR GOLDEN: Well, the -- I got to say
23 that the -- we need to be able to focus, and I think
24 there has to be more communications.

25 And the Mayor here has to, I believe, lead

1 here in getting us, not only that we have meetings
2 within each borough, or with the legislators, as to
3 a plan, but each community board, on a quarterly, or
4 at least every six months, we should have a meeting
5 with those community boards, with the building
6 department, with the different city assets, to make
7 sure that we're planning correctly, and that there
8 are some changes coming up, that everybody in the
9 city is aware of these changes, and what are we
10 doing as a single unit, to bring that together,
11 where we have the overcrowding conditions, we have
12 illegal conversions.

13 How do we stop the illegal conversions?

14 How do we balance the system?

15 And how do we bring down the overcrowding in
16 our school districts by finding the properties that
17 you need, and to find the leased properties that you
18 need, so you can go forward and give the best
19 education?

20 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: I mean, I actually
21 think that bringing a lot of people together by
22 borough is a great idea.

23 Somebody had mentioned it at the last
24 meeting, and we already started -- I already asked
25 my (indiscernible) to start thinking about it.

1 The other things, as based on a different
2 meeting that I had a few months ago, we had our
3 first meeting with the community planning boards'
4 education chair people about three weeks ago. And
5 it was so productive, that we agreed that we were
6 going to have these meetings at least four times a
7 year.

8 SENATOR GOLDEN: Good.

9 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: And, this way,
10 they can tell us, because it's -- you know, they're
11 not congruent to school districts, but meeting with
12 the community planning boards also gives us -- and,
13 also, I asked them who they wanted to hear from, and
14 they all asked: school-construction authority,
15 someone from enrollment.

16 So the more conversations we have like that,
17 the better.

18 SENATOR GOLDEN: The -- and the growth of the
19 schools, obviously, getting the best outcome, the
20 best product, that we can possibly get, we have
21 to -- and to get those kids to go across and go to
22 where these schools are going to be built, is,
23 obviously, the STEAM, the STREAM, the
24 gifted-and-talented, the AP courses.

25 But, we're looking down the road.

1 I don't want to lose, you know, a generation
2 of kids when it comes to STEM and to STEAM and to
3 gifted-and-talented.

4 My -- my -- some of my communities are very
5 upset with the gifted-and-talented because there's
6 not enough programs in our districts.

7 Do we have a -- are you getting more problems
8 with that in other districts?

9 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Yeah, well, what
10 we've tried to do is increase the amount of
11 enrichment programs in every single school.

12 And I was just, again, in one of your
13 schools, 112, Louise's school.

14 SENATOR GOLDEN: Yep.

15 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: That's where
16 Commissioner Bratton and I went.

17 And I asked her how she was doing.

18 And she said what she's doing, she's doing a
19 (indiscernible) enrichment for the students who need
20 extra support in that area.

21 So I do think that, in terms of -- we're
22 trying to serve the kids at the top, the bottom, and
23 the middle all simultaneously.

24 And I think that is something we're really
25 working on through professional development.

1 But, I'm happy to discuss this further.

2 But I do think what we're thinking of doing
3 in the Sunset Park area, in particular, is going to
4 be very helpful.

5 SENATOR GOLDEN: And I -- because of time,
6 EIPs.

7 EIPs are down, I understand. On some of our
8 kids, somewhere around 40 percent of the programs
9 they should be getting, they're not getting.

10 I got to -- obviously, we all have large EIP
11 programs. And we might -- got to make sure they
12 have the best possible opportunities for success.

13 And believe it or not, my kid -- a lot of
14 kids are getting a great, great education, but it's
15 not everybody.

16 My son is not taking it. My son is out there
17 on his own because of the process that you have to
18 go through; the process going through the State,
19 having to go to court every year. And then, of
20 course, not getting the services that are required.

21 You're supposed to get, is another layer
22 of -- an insult, actually, to that family that
23 struggled to get those IEPs and can't get what
24 they need for their kids.

25 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Well, I think

1 we've made a lot of strides on this.

2 And I think, you know, Senator Felder can
3 also testify that we're working very hard on this.

4 But I also want to tell you that we have
5 increased our number of speech teachers. We've
6 increased our number of OT teachers. We've
7 increased the number of clinical psychologists.

8 These are all very important people in the
9 whole IEP process.

10 So if you don't have the right personnel, you
11 also don't have the correct services.

12 The other thing I will tell you that we've
13 tried, and this is where I think pre-K is going to
14 be particularly helpful, because we were doing what
15 we call "Turning 5"; analyzing students before they
16 came into kindergarten.

17 Now we're getting -- catching kids one year
18 earlier. We have the "Turning 4" programs and the
19 "Turning 3" programs so that we're able to analyze
20 what students need prior to.

21 Here, again, something we need to work even
22 better at is our -- where we log in this
23 information. Our SESIS needs some improvement.

24 And I think one of the things we've
25 understood very well this year, is that special ed

1 has to be a top priority.

2 I've always been -- whatever job I've ever
3 had, one of the things that I made one of my top
4 three priorities is students with special needs,
5 because I believe those are the kids who need extra
6 support.

7 I do think we've done a good job.

8 I think, like everything else, that
9 particular one, more to be done.

10 But we've put a lot of extra resources this
11 year. This budget has a lot more money for special
12 ed and for both -- and for District 75.

13 SENATOR GOLDEN: Well, in closing, I want to
14 say, thank you.

15 And I want to, again, focus that we do these
16 quarterly meetings with our community boards, with
17 our communities, so we know what's going on, and we
18 do them with a unit -- a city unit that's got
19 Buildings, everybody, at that table, so we know
20 where we're going.

21 And, of course, I think we should do it with
22 our legislators on a borough-wide approach.

23 And the Mayor has got to be at some of these.

24 And I know, in conversation -- I would
25 imagine you're in conversation with the Mayor on a

1 regular basis.

2 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Absolutely.

3 SENATOR GOLDEN: When do you brief with the
4 Mayor? Every week? Or --

5 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: At least once a
6 week.

7 SENATOR GOLDEN: Okay. Thank you very much.

8 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Those weeklies -- those
9 weekly meetings are scheduled?

10 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Yes, I mean,
11 depending -- there's always an emergency and we
12 reschedule it. But the reality is, that we do meet
13 once a week. And we have teams on both our sides
14 who meet with each other. So, there's a constant
15 conversation back-and-forth.

16 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Senator Peralta.

17 SENATOR PERALTA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 First and foremost, I just want to say that
19 I am looking forward to our meeting that needed to
20 be rescheduled yesterday.

21 Thank you for waiting.

22 But, today we are here to talk about mayor
23 control.

24 And first and foremost, I just want to say
25 that I think you're doing a terrific job as

1 chancellor.

2 But today we're here to talk about mayor
3 control.

4 And the issues here that have been brought up
5 by some of my colleagues is the fact that, this is
6 such an important issue, such a top priority for the
7 Mayor; and, yet, he is not here.

8 He has chosen to be at radio shows, and not
9 be here at this hearing.

10 And I can get your answer, when you said that
11 you were up in Albany for a whole day, and you were
12 at meetings and you testified.

13 But as you know, one day of testimony, one
14 day of meetings, doesn't move things in Albany.

15 In fact, they don't move things anywhere in
16 city hall.

17 So I think that, if the Mayor, if this is
18 such a top priority, I agree with my colleagues that
19 the Mayor should be at these hearings and should be
20 personally answering these questions.

21 But be that as it may, we will move on, and
22 I will ask you some of the questions that I would
23 ask him.

24 So, over the last two years, how many times
25 have the full PEP (the Panel for Educational Policy)

1 denied a proposal or a contract referred to it for
2 its approval by the DOE?

3 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: A few.

4 Ursulina has the exact number.

5 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Yep. One second.

6 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: I will tell you
7 just all -- one of them in particular they asked to
8 us revise, and to take back, and that was the Amazon
9 contract. And the Amazon contract was not supported
10 because it did not have provisions for blind
11 students.

12 And we went back, and because of our
13 purchasing power, we were able to get Amazon to redo
14 the entire contract and provide Braille services
15 through Amazon, not only for our students, but
16 nationally.

17 So I think that was a big step forward in
18 terms of how we look at contracts.

19 And our contract subcommittee on the PEP is
20 particular vigilance. In fact, they look at every
21 single print, and bring to our attention the issues
22 they want to discuss.

23 Ursulina?

24 URSULINA RAMIREZ: We've actually altered
25 five proposals, based on the panel and the CEC's

1 involvement.

2 One was actual complete vote down by the
3 panel, and the others were revisions or withdrawals.

4 And, actually, currently, and as of last
5 night, we're having -- engaging the panel members
6 and the communities on several different co-location
7 proposals that we pushed back for a couple of
8 meetings, to continue to engage communities. And
9 those are scheduled to be voted on in June.

10 SENATOR PERALTA: Okay. So one, in total,
11 that has been completely denied, and five that have
12 been sent back been for revision?

13 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Sorry. One that was voted
14 down, one was withdrawn, and the other three were
15 revised.

16 SENATOR PERALTA: Okay. And that one that
17 was voted down, was that revised?

18 URSULINA RAMIREZ: No.

19 The one that was voted down, we did not put
20 back forward to the panel.

21 SENATOR PERALTA: Okay. Good.

22 You know, PEP is an issue that we as
23 legislators are discussing, in terms of what the
24 make-up will look like, and, is it working -- and
25 these are some of the questions.

1 Is it working?

2 Is there enough input by the parents?

3 Do they actually have enough say when it
4 comes to moving issues forward?

5 And one of the concerns that I would like for
6 you to address is the concerns that I've heard at
7 meetings: Is the PEP just a rubber stamp for the
8 administration?

9 And I -- it's a concern, so I want to bring
10 it up, and I want to get clarification, and your
11 side and your angle, and what factually happens.

12 That's why I'm bringing up this question.

13 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: I would say that
14 this PEP, right now, is a lot more independent than
15 it would have been three or four years ago.

16 I sat on both.

17 Remember, I was deputy chancellor under the
18 prior administration, and there were seldom
19 pre-meetings.

20 This PEP meets prior to every hearing two or
21 three times, particularly when there's a contract to
22 be discussed or a co-location.

23 For example, yesterday's discussion on the
24 co-locations, which is why we put them off for a
25 while, almost every single PEP member had gone to

1 visit schools that were on the co-location site.

2 So they actually go, they look, they
3 interface with other people, and they come back with
4 suggestions based on their school visits.

5 So I think that it's really -- it's a very
6 active PEP, very carefully selected to represent
7 different interests.

8 There's one PEP member who is very involved
9 in special needs and has a special-needs child. And
10 every time there's a special-needs issue, we ask her
11 to take a stance on that.

12 We have another PEP member who is very
13 engaged and involved with English-language learners.

14 So I think the PEP members, to a large
15 degree, other than the ones that are chosen by the
16 borough presidents.

17 Remember, there are five representatives, one
18 from each of the borough presidents, so they
19 certainly come with a voice based on their
20 particular borough, and what they have been either
21 instructed to say or to ask or to think about.

22 So I think it is a very fair representation.

23 I will tell you, they do a lot of talking
24 among themselves.

25 When they ask for more information, they've

1 asked for -- they've asked for people from my
2 department.

3 Like, they've asked Milady Baez to speak to
4 them. They've asked Corinne Rello-Anselmi, they've
5 asked Lorraine Grillo, to speak.

6 They ask me to make available to them, people
7 that can give them more information.

8 So I think it is pretty independent.

9 I think, also, obviously, mayors do want to
10 have their own agendas, to some degree, so I think
11 putting it on there.

12 But in terms of anyone who has gone to any of
13 our PEP meetings, and last night was one of them,
14 and parents get up and they talk and they say what
15 they want to say.

16 They are listened to.

17 I want to be very clear, they are definitely
18 listened to.

19 But listening and agreeing are not always the
20 same thing.

21 And I think that's one of the things.

22 So in terms of -- and parents e-mail me all
23 the time.

24 One of the reasons I do the town hall
25 meeting, and I want to be clear on this, and

1 I didn't know this when I started this job:

2 When I went to my first town hall meeting,
3 and I believe it was in Queens, they gave me these
4 cards that people -- it was Staten Island,
5 actually-- and they gave me these cards of questions
6 people had.

7 So I took the questions, and I started
8 reading the questions and answering them right on
9 the spot.

10 And, all of a sudden, there was total silence
11 in the room. And the CEC president, I guess, told
12 me, You know, you don't usually answer the questions
13 here.

14 I said, Well, how do they get answered?

15 Well, someone calls them up, or whatever.

16 I have gone to every town hall meeting in
17 every district. I have not missed one district,
18 some districts I've been to twice, and answered
19 every question, within hours, asked of me.

20 And in that particular one, the ones I didn't
21 get to, I called that Saturday --

22 I was new on the job. I didn't have as many
23 things on my head as I have now.

24 -- and called parents at home.

25 And one parent in particular hung up on me.

1 I said, This is the Chancellor. I have your
2 question, I want to answer you.

3 And she hung up, and I called her back.

4 And she said, Stop playing games.

5 You know, I said, No, this really, really is
6 the Chancellor. I said, You asked a question.

7 "Oh, my God."

8 So I do believe in that.

9 I was a parent of public-school kids.

10 I expect the respect to be shown to everyone
11 in the system. And I do my town hall meetings with
12 my own translation.

13 I will -- you know, there was one meeting
14 where the translators didn't show up, and I spoke in
15 Spanish.

16 I think it's really, really important that
17 we're out there.

18 We're public servants. I take that very,
19 very seriously.

20 And I think, to some degree, how you evaluate
21 mayoral control is, also, who does he choose as
22 chancellor?

23 Mayor de Blasio could have chosen anyone.
24 I mean, I'm sure he interviewed a lot of other
25 people.

1 But he chose me, and I think he chose me
2 because I'm an educator.

3 I am my own person. We don't always agree on
4 everything. I'm very happy to say, you know,
5 I think we should do this versus this.

6 And I think that's an important way to
7 evaluate a mayor and mayoral control: Who's the
8 chancellor?

9 I represent him, certainly, under Joel Klein.

10 Many times I went out and represented him at
11 many meetings, particularly parent meetings.

12 So --

13 SENATOR PERALTA: Well, I appreciate that,
14 and I think that he did make a wise decision when he
15 chose you as the chancellor, because we could look
16 back at other decisions, that we don't need to talk
17 about here.

18 But this was a wise decision when it came to
19 that.

20 But, again, the reason that some of these
21 concerns come up is because, I'll give you an
22 example:

23 Just recently, as you just stated, the
24 Mayor -- every mayor, not just this particular
25 mayor -- but every mayor has a certain agenda and

1 wants to move forward. And sometimes they will take
2 certain measures and recommendations, and they will
3 accept them. And sometimes they won't accept them,
4 and they move forward.

5 On a different front, just recently, a
6 community-board forum in Queens, there was a vote on
7 bike lanes, where the community boards rejected the
8 bike lanes.

9 And the day after -- I think maybe it was
10 even the same day, maybe the day after, the Mayor
11 said, That's nice. We're moving forward.

12 And, again, this is why some of the concerns
13 pop up when it comes to PEP and others, and other
14 organizations or committees, because, are we really
15 listening to what the recommendations are? And,
16 will the agenda get in the way, even though the
17 recommendation is contrary to what that particular
18 mayor has on his agenda?

19 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Like I said,
20 I will answer for myself and my interactions, and
21 I take very seriously.

22 I will tell you that, our CEC Saturday
23 meetings, which I really -- last almost three hours.
24 And several of those presidents have become people
25 I call for when I want opinions, because they are,

1 genuinely, the people who are closest to the parents
2 in that district, and they're all different.

3 That's another thing.

4 When you're in the -- and, again, it doesn't
5 even matter by borough. Within each borough, there
6 are all these neighborhoods that have different
7 interests.

8 You know, I don't want those kids in my
9 building.

10 Really?

11 And what do those kids -- who are those kids?

12 They're my kids.

13 So how do you, you know, kind of balance
14 everybody else's interests and come up with
15 something?

16 I can't stress enough, that when I'm stuck,
17 and I get stuck once in a while, what's best for
18 kids?

19 And I don't think of my children, because
20 I wasn't -- I was a mother who kind of said to my
21 kids, you know, Get used to it. Life isn't always
22 fair.

23 But -- so I think of my grandchildren
24 because, for my grandchildren, I will go to hell and
25 back to make sure they have the best things

1 possible.

2 So how does everybody look at everybody in
3 their building, as their grandson and granddaughter,
4 and make sure we're doing the best for them?

5 SENATOR PERALTA: Yeah. One -- just a --
6 just two more questions, briefly.

7 So last year, as it was noted here by the
8 Chairman, \$21.8 billion was invested in the
9 Department of Education, which \$9.15 billion came
10 from Albany; or, 41 percent.

11 So that is a majority -- if you were to
12 compare it, that's a majority shareholder stake when
13 it comes to education.

14 So why shouldn't we, as state legislators,
15 have a say, where we revisit on a much shorter time
16 span, whether it's two or three years, to review
17 mayoral control, to see how the system is going, see
18 how it's playing out?

19 Why not review the concept of mayor control
20 on a timeline staggered, maybe a year after mayor
21 elections so no one can say it is political, just to
22 sort of see, how it's going?

23 How the money is being spent; is it being
24 spent wisely?

25 Are the children moving forward?

1 Is the curriculum moving forward?

2 Because I understand the Mayor comes here and
3 he says that he wants seven years, but that's with
4 the assumption he's going to be the mayor again.

5 What if he's not the mayor again?

6 Now we are stuck with a mayor who we have no
7 say, if we are to give him seven years.

8 We would have no say on how his curriculum is
9 moving forward, we would have no say how the
10 Education Department is moving, because we are
11 stuck, and we gave him -- we've given him seven
12 years.

13 So why not the two-year or three-year, kind
14 of similar to what the Assembly just passed
15 yesterday?

16 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Well, let me
17 answer this two different ways.

18 First and foremost, no matter what we do,
19 I believe we're setting a foundation.

20 No one's going to take away pre-K.

21 No one is going to take away community
22 schools.

23 Also, evaluate us on our record, our
24 promotion.

25 Our graduation rate is growing.

1 Our dropout rate is lessening.

2 Our attendance is moving.

3 So those are successful things that anybody
4 who comes after me has to continue or get better,
5 because that's the foundation, that's the bottom
6 line, that's the legacy.

7 I think, also, certainly, as a former
8 principal, I was a principal when, every two years,
9 or one year and a half, we had a different
10 chancellor.

11 And why did we have a different chancellor?

12 Because the chancellor and the mayor at the
13 time got mad.

14 One wanted one thing, one wanted another; it
15 hit the papers.

16 And all of a sudden, us and -- and I remember
17 one situation particularly, where the principals got
18 together, we had had a phone call in the district
19 that I was principal in, "Okay, what do we do?"

20 Do we stand up for the chancellor? Do we try
21 to take the wrath of the mayor at the time?

22 It happened to be a chancellor that
23 I particularly cared for, that I thought was doing
24 really good work.

25 And then, all of a sudden, the stability went

1 away and we were caught in the middle.

2 I don't want the teachers and the principals
3 to get caught in the middle of this.

4 So I think, if we do a particularly good job,
5 which I think we actually are doing better than
6 good, that that foundation has to be for someone
7 else to improve on and make better.

8 No one, hopefully -- and that's, you know,
9 one of the reasons I took on this job, and that's
10 why I'm in a hurry to get it right, no one will undo
11 what we say we've done and will work.

12 SENATOR PERALTA: And that's a very valid
13 point.

14 But, again, the chancellor serves at the
15 pleasure of the mayor.

16 So when the assumption is, when you're asking
17 for seven years, is that you will be the next mayor.

18 And what happens if he's not the next mayor,
19 and the next mayor comes in and doesn't choose
20 Carmen Fariña as the chancellor?

21 And --

22 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: My husband will
23 say "thank you."

24 [Laughter.]

25 SENATOR PERALTA: And then that next

1 chancellor will then have to work -- you're right --
2 hopefully, with the foundation that you've laid out
3 so they can build on it.

4 But what if that chancellor just doesn't
5 build on that foundation?

6 Now we as state legislators will be stuck
7 with the bill for the next four years of this
8 individual's mayoralty.

9 And that's why, again, I ask the question:
10 Why not two years, why not three years, as opposed
11 to seven?

12 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: I think
13 (indiscernible) my statement, that what the Assembly
14 said, with three years, certainly, to me, is a good
15 starting point.

16 Anything less than that, I think, would
17 create more instability.

18 But any mayor has the right to choose his
19 commissioners. You know, it's not just the
20 chancellor, but, you know, the police commissioner,
21 the fire commissioner. It's the way it's been done
22 forever.

23 I think my job, and certainly the other
24 commissioners' job, is to do the best job possible
25 so everyone will be fighting against our record.

1 And I want to say publicly that I also think
2 it's important that a chancellor be an educator.

3 And that that be part of what I think
4 Mayor de Blasio, from the very beginning, when he
5 was running for mayor, he said, One promise I can
6 make you is that I want an educator.

7 And I think that's something the electorate
8 holds the mayor accountable for.

9 You know, if that's what you run on, then
10 that's what you vote for.

11 And if someone says, I want a CO, then that's
12 what you vote for.

13 But I do think the mayor has the right to
14 make these decisions.

15 SENATOR PERALTA: Well, I just want to end by
16 saying, (speaking in Spanish).

17 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: (Speaking in
18 Spanish).

19 SENATOR PERALTA: (Speaking in Spanish).

20 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: (Speaking in
21 Spanish.)

22 SENATOR PERALTA: Can I just say, thank you
23 very much.

24 I think she's doing a great job.

25 SENATOR MARCELLINO: I wish you guys wouldn't

1 talk Greek.

2 Senator Stavisky.

3 SENATOR STAVISKY: Maybe I should say,
4 (speaking in Spanish).

5 You've touched on a question that I was going
6 to ask you, and perhaps you can expand on it.

7 If you were writing a job qualification for
8 chancellor, what would you put on the list of
9 required experiences or education or, whatever?

10 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Well, obviously,
11 an educator, but not a theorist.

12 A practical educator.

13 SENATOR STAVISKY: Somebody -- my husband
14 used to call them "educationists."

15 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Well, I do think
16 it's really typical of what we've done from the
17 beginning.

18 We've said, no -- no one can apply to become
19 a principal who hasn't had seven years -- the first
20 chancellor's reg that I put in place: No one can
21 become a principal without seven years pedagogical
22 experience.

23 It can be a combination of teacher, guidance
24 counselor, whatever, but, seven years.

25 Then we said, which is -- nobody thought we

1 would actually do: All superintendents have to
2 reapply for their job. And only people who have
3 been principals for a minimum number of years can
4 become superintendents.

5 Because how do you have credibility; how do
6 you get -- how do you tell people to do their job if
7 you haven't done part of it yourself?

8 So I think qualification, and I'm not going
9 to tell you how many years; but certainly, years, in
10 terms of having served in some kind of educational
11 program.

12 I'd say another qualification: demonstrated
13 experience in working well with others.

14 And "others" could be elected officials,
15 parents.

16 Certainly, in my whole history, I've done all
17 those things. I've been able to talk to a variety
18 of people.

19 And I think that should be part of the
20 qualifications for this job, because you need to be
21 able to do that.

22 And the other thing that I think -- I've
23 thought a lot about in the past couple of years,
24 particularly since I've taken on this job, being a
25 good communicator.

1 I mean, we have added now, into all our
2 professional development for administrators, a
3 communications course.

4 How to be able to write well, so when you
5 communicate with your parents, and everything else,
6 you can do that.

7 How do you speak before an audience?

8 I mean, that's part of the Common Core for
9 our kids, but it should be part of us.

10 It shouldn't be someone who doesn't think
11 that they have to explain themselves.

12 That's why I'm here today.

13 I do believe being a good communicator, and a
14 good listener, again, not always agreeing, but,
15 listening, and being able to understand what people
16 are saying in the context.

17 So I think those are three qualifications
18 that I think are crucial.

19 SENATOR STAVISKY: On another issue, along
20 with Senator Marcellino, we were both high school
21 teachers. He just taught longer I did.

22 But I've always had the idea that a school is
23 run by the principal, and --

24 SENATOR MARCELLINO: The school is run by the
25 secretaries.

1 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Oh, absolutely.

2 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Sorry about that.

3 SENATOR STAVISKY: No, no, you're right.

4 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: It's true.

5 SENATOR STAVISKY: It's true, because
6 secretaries know where the bodies are buried.

7 -- and they are supervised by
8 superintendents.

9 And at one point there were over 100 --
10 I think 110 superintendents.

11 We're down to 44.

12 We have one for each of the 32 districts,
13 plus two for District 75, and then miscellaneous
14 ones in the boroughs.

15 Are they impeding the ability of the
16 principals?

17 Is there a way where we can return some of
18 the school authority to the principal to administer
19 whatever the superintendent and chancellor,
20 et cetera, hand down?

21 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: I think so, but
22 I think autonomy needs to be earned, not given away;
23 and let me tell you what I mean by that.

24 Every superintendent was -- by the way,
25 I meet with all the superintendents once a month,

1 and I spend at least an hour and a half.

2 SENATOR STAVISKY: You meet in a big room.

3 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Well, 44 is not so
4 bad.

5 And, remember, that when they were
6 (indiscernible), which was the prior system,
7 although they had less schools, many of them did not
8 have the rating power, as well as the support.

9 So it was a little, you know, truncated in
10 ways it shouldn't be.

11 But these superintendents have the ability to
12 both evaluate principals through the PPOs, as well
13 as to visit schools and determine who needs more
14 support.

15 They've also been clearly instructed that
16 there has to be the right principal in every
17 building so that students and teachers succeed.

18 But all the superintendents were told, and
19 that's the way I've always run all my systems, to
20 put their schools in tiers of three.

21 Who are the principals that you basically
22 leave, more or less, alone? They make all their
23 decisions.

24 Who are the principals in the meaning -- in
25 the middle, who you actually give a little bit more

1 support in the area they need it?

2 Because, if I'm a principal, and I, all of a
3 sudden, have to take on a special program that
4 I know little about, I need support.

5 And, who are the principals that need more
6 supervision when making certain types of decisions?

7 And one of the things we've said to look for,
8 if you're a school with a, let's say, 30 percent
9 turnover rate of teachers, I expect the
10 superintendent to ask, Why?

11 Why are teachers not staying beyond a certain
12 amount of time?

13 What are you doing as a principal that may
14 not be encouraging teachers to stay, or supporting
15 them, or whatever?

16 So I do think it's a very individualized
17 system.

18 I do think that principals still have a lot
19 of autonomy as a principal. There are a lot of
20 decisions. Who you hire.

21 The curriculum is not open for discussion in
22 terms of, I expect certain things.

23 You know, we had a few years where every
24 teacher and every principal was doing their own
25 thing.

1 So if you moved from an elementary school to
2 a middle school, there was no continuity.

3 If you had five feeder schools, for example,
4 elementary schools moving into one school, those
5 teachers had to figure out what school you came
6 from, to figure out what math curriculum you were
7 using, what literacy curriculum you were using.

8 And that made middle school much more
9 difficult, and it's already difficult enough.

10 Middle school is, obviously, to me, the most
11 difficult grades to teach.

12 But you need to be able to have that
13 consistency, so I think that's part of what the
14 superintendents do.

15 SENATOR STAVISKY: Lastly, you spoke before
16 about the gifted-and-talented programs, and those
17 are programs that I happen to be interested in.

18 I know we disagree on the issue of
19 specialized high schools.

20 But I am convinced that, with additional
21 gifted-and-talented programs, particularly in the
22 early grades, that it will become much less of an
23 issue of diversity.

24 And, how are you going to implement the
25 additional gifted-and-talented programs that I think

1 really have to follow UPK?

2 To me, it's a natural progression.

3 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: I totally agree
4 with you, but let me tell how we're doing it a
5 little bit different.

6 I go back to the days when I was a teacher of
7 gifted-and-talented, when it was called "IGC."

8 And I was asked -- I said the other night,
9 I must have a thing about people bringing me back
10 from leaves.

11 The superintendent asked me if I would give
12 up my maternity leave, to come back and teach the
13 first gifted-and-talented program at the time in
14 Brooklyn, and it started in third grade, and there
15 was a difference why it started in third grade.

16 It started in third grade, because the
17 ability to get the word out to all the parents of
18 kids who were in second grade, across the district,
19 because it wasn't just in one, school, were much
20 better than if you started it younger.

21 So, to me, we have four new
22 gifted-and-talented programs starting in September.

23 The other major difference, that is under,
24 I guess, the State Legislature, now,
25 gifted-and-talented teachers need to be certified.

1 There's a certification for
2 gifted-and-talented, and very few universities
3 actually give those courses.

4 So we're working with the New York Historical
5 Society and Hunter College to give that
6 certification to the teachers we hope to hire for
7 these programs.

8 The other thing is in District -- let me
9 see -- 7, 23, 16, I forgot the other one, but, there
10 are four districts where we are going to be actually
11 using multiple measures for all second-graders in
12 that district.

13 So we are going to be asking all
14 second-graders to be eligible (indiscernible), and
15 we will pick the ones that meet the criteria. We
16 have special rubrics.

17 And it's all done, and I'm happy to share it
18 with you.

19 And those students will go to that
20 third-grade gifted-and-talented, starting this
21 September.

22 The other thing I promised the -- and this we
23 did in conjunction with the CEC presidents. We had
24 them all in on a Saturday, we discussed what the
25 possibilities were to this.

1 And they will also have -- and it goes right
2 to your issue -- honors programs in at least one of
3 their middle schools for these kids who now will
4 come up the pipeline.

5 And then -- this is how I do think we will
6 better prepare the kids to be able to get to
7 screened programs, specialized high schools, because
8 it will be a program.

9 The reason I didn't do it in early childhood
10 is, as a principal, I had a gifted-and-talented
11 program. And what we found is that a lot of
12 students -- remember, and I don't know if it's
13 true -- if you did it, it was, basically, based on
14 verbal ability, and a lot of it had to do with
15 socioeconomics, and it doesn't show long-term
16 giftedness.

17 So I would have, often, many students who
18 would reach second grade, who still couldn't read
19 and write, but were in that track.

20 So, as a principal, we moved more to a
21 school-wide enrichment model, overall. And,
22 actually, our test scores started zooming when we
23 did that.

24 So I do think there's a lot of ways to
25 approach this, but I think honors classes in middle

1 school are crucial, advanced placement in
2 high school is crucial. And I think you're going to
3 see a lot of more that of citywide.

4 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

5 And, lastly, let me just say, I do appreciate
6 your coming into the districts.

7 We prefer that you come on a Thursday when
8 we're in -- when we're not in Albany, but, you came
9 to a CEC meeting in District 25 a couple of months
10 ago.

11 And I can testify, the Chancellor had cards;
12 she read the questions, and then answered the
13 questions.

14 It was, obviously, not a pre-staged,
15 whatever, and we thank you for that.

16 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you, Senator.

17 The Senator Perkins.

18 SENATOR PERKINS: Good morning.

19 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Good morning.

20 SENATOR PERKINS: Thank you for being here,
21 and for what you do for us, and for our children in
22 the public schools.

23 I'm not an automatic supporter of mayoral
24 control. It was born under the Bloomberg
25 Administration, under a dictatorial approach.

1 And as a result, we have a -- you know, you
2 started creating these charter schools, and they
3 were not brought to our attention in terms of a, you
4 know, sort of more open process.

5 And, in fact, some of -- it was a period in
6 which such schools were proliferating throughout the
7 country, as a matter of fact.

8 And, frankly, it turns out they -- most of
9 the places where they existed, they didn't add up.
10 And in many places they don't exist anymore.

11 Nevertheless, we have them in the city.

12 And -- so, first, I want to get an update,
13 from your point view, about what's happening with
14 the charters.

15 And, you know, I'm a product of the New York
16 City Public School System, and -- the old-school.

17 So, I just want to get, sort of, your honest
18 witness update on what's happening with these
19 schools.

20 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: I think, you know,
21 charter schools, like parochial schools, like public
22 schools, are all different, and they all have
23 different purposes, but they're all our kids.

24 SENATOR PERKINS: They're all our kids,
25 there's no question about that. That's why we all

1 are here.

2 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: And I visit
3 charter schools to see, what are the things that we
4 can learn from them?

5 We've worked with two or three particular
6 schools on certain things.

7 And one of the pushes that I'm doing right
8 now are in terms of using departmentalized
9 instruction to teach math in fifth grade, which is
10 one of the things I observed in a lot of the charter
11 schools.

12 One of the charter-school networks on Common
13 has been particularly helpful in helping us with
14 professional development of principals, in terms of
15 the teacher feedback.

16 And, also, I go to visit schools that, in
17 many cases, particularly the independent charter
18 schools that may need extra help and support, so --
19 because if they're only one-of-a-kind, if I can put
20 them in touch with another school that can help them
21 in whatever area they need help.

22 So I think it's, pretty much, an individual
23 situation, based on the individual school,
24 principals, and needs.

25 But, again, it's parent choice.

1 There are other options.

2 And I do think that, working together, we can
3 help, you know, all kids succeed.

4 SENATOR PERKINS: So in that regard, what are
5 the demographics of the students?

6 Do you have a breakdown in terms of, you
7 know, Black, White, Latino, et cetera?

8 URSULINA RAMIREZ: For our charter-school
9 students, it is close to 50/50 in terms of
10 male/female. Approximately, 55 percent Black,
11 37 percent Latino, 2.2 percent Asian, 4 percent
12 White, and 2 percent Other.

13 SENATOR PERKINS: So 92 percent non-White.

14 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Correct -- or -- no.

15 SENATOR PERKINS: 55 and 37 is, what?

16 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: You're close to
17 75 percent.

18 SENATOR PERKINS: Huh?

19 URSULINA RAMIREZ: You're close to
20 75 percent, 80 percent.

21 SENATOR PERKINS: 55 and 37 is what --
22 I thought I heard those numbers?

23 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Yes, that's correct.

24 SENATOR PERKINS: So 55 and -- I'm a
25 public -- 55, 37. 92.

1 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Yes.

2 SENATOR PERKINS: Right, 92.

3 So that's sort of, like -- why is nobody else
4 going to those schools if they're so good?

5 Why aren't White parents sending their
6 children to charter schools?

7 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Well, remember,
8 there are lots of options.

9 You have independent schools, parochial
10 schools, charter schools, and public schools.

11 And I think, also, a lot of it is based on
12 demographics, where you live in the city.

13 I mean --

14 SENATOR PERKINS: Why are charter schools
15 only in those places?

16 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: It's their choice.

17 URSULINA RAMIREZ: We have charter schools in
18 some -- in neighborhoods that have predominantly
19 White communities, including District 3 and
20 District 2 and District 15.

21 SENATOR PERKINS: And in District 3, which
22 I also represent, what are the demographics of those
23 kids?

24 URSULINA RAMIREZ: I don't have the specifics
25 on the demographics of the students in District 3,

1 but we can get back to you.

2 SENATOR PERKINS: Do you think it's any
3 different than the general demographic picture?

4 URSULINA RAMIREZ: I can't make that the
5 assumption. I'd have to get back to you.

6 SENATOR PERKINS: Okay.

7 Assuming that it isn't, why don't -- why are
8 these schools only attracting parents of color?

9 What is it that they're doing, or that
10 they're not getting, in the traditional public
11 school?

12 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: I mean, I think,
13 to some degree, it's parent choice.

14 Many of the schools have an extended time.

15 And, you know, again, parents choose for all
16 kinds of different reasons.

17 SENATOR PERKINS: Okay. So -- but you have
18 this significant disparity between where one group
19 of parents send their children and another group of
20 parents send their children.

21 URSULINA RAMIREZ: I also want to note that
22 our -- as a system as a whole, the majority of our
23 students are Black and Latino.

24 SENATOR PERKINS: So...?

25 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: In public schools.

1 URSULINA RAMIREZ: In public schools.

2 SENATOR PERKINS: So...?

3 So -- but that -- I understand that.

4 You know, I'm a native New Yorker, so
5 I understand that.

6 But I'm trying to understand, what is it
7 that -- why are White parents not using the
8 so-called "charter schools"?

9 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: They are if
10 they're in neighborhoods where they live.

11 In District --

12 SENATOR PERKINS: What are the -- give me
13 some statistics on that.

14 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Well, I will tell
15 you that there's one in my particular neighbor.

16 SENATOR PERKINS: But what are the
17 percentage? Give me some numbers.

18 There's one in your particular neighborhood.
19 Okay.

20 URSULINA RAMIREZ: I will get back to you on
21 the specifics in the neighborhoods, so districts --

22 SENATOR PERKINS: Please do, when you get a
23 chance, because I'm very concerned about that,
24 because, you know, today is, you know, the day that,
25 to some extent, we are acknowledging the civil

1 rights movement.

2 And the fact that, if today is Malcolm X's
3 birthday, and he, amongst others, like Dr. King,
4 were concerned about these kind of disparities,
5 because they tend to reflect some sort of
6 second-class arrangements.

7 You know, integration was an effort to get
8 away from that.

9 And I still see that, in this city, since the
10 Bloomberg Administration, most of our children --
11 most of the children who are in these schools are
12 children of color.

13 And why are these schools not in other
14 communities?

15 Why are these communities able to get what
16 they need at a so-called "traditional public
17 schools"?

18 Whereas, these so-called "privatized" models,
19 some of which are for-profit, are sort of where the
20 parents have to go to get the same kind of -- the
21 quality -- to get a quality education.

22 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Well, my goal --

23 SENATOR PERKINS: And the question is, also,
24 whether or not they are even getting that quality
25 education.

1 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: My goal is to make
2 every school a school of choice.

3 And I will tell that you one of the major
4 things that we've tried to do, certainly in the last
5 year and a half, is to put out grants, where charter
6 schools and public schools in the same building
7 would find ways to collaborate and work together.

8 And that's, to me, where your issue of, how
9 do you get people to work together and come
10 together? is really, really important.

11 But in terms of very specifics by district,
12 we're very happy to provide that so you can see the
13 breakdown by different parts of the city.

14 SENATOR PERKINS: Right, but has it ever
15 occurred to you that there's this sort of picture of
16 two types of systems, with two different types of
17 populations?

18 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: I think, in
19 neighborhoods, they tend to be pretty similar by
20 neighborhood in terms of different parts of the
21 city. Some parts of the city may have more charter
22 schools than others.

23 But in terms of the ones that are within a
24 geographical neighborhood, I think the numbers tend
25 to be really rather -- pretty much the same,

1 ethnically.

2 SENATOR PERKINS: Can you -- can you -- you
3 say you have that report?

4 Could you generate that?

5 URSULINA RAMIREZ: We will get that for you.

6 SENATOR PERKINS: Yeah, please do, because
7 I haven't seen that as I travel around my district
8 and around other neighborhoods. So -- and it
9 bothers me, because it reminds me of an era that
10 I think we want to -- we don't want to repeat.

11 And so -- and I don't -- now, how are we
12 doing with our charter schools? How are they
13 comparing?

14 Do you have statistics that represent
15 success?

16 URSULINA RAMIREZ: We'll get you the specific
17 statistics, but we are seeing success in both our --
18 some of our charter schools, and in our traditional
19 public schools.

20 SENATOR PERKINS: And in terms of the
21 charters, what do -- how do they compare?

22 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: To each other, or
23 to the public schools?

24 SENATOR PERKINS: To the public schools,
25 yeah, because --

1 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: In terms of ELA
2 scores, public schools are doing a little bit
3 better.

4 And in terms of math scores, the charter
5 schools are doing a little bit better.

6 SENATOR PERKINS: So you have -- so you will
7 send me that report?

8 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Yes, we have that
9 report. It's public.

10 SENATOR PERKINS: Have you looked at what's
11 happening with them in other parts of the country?

12 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: We've looked at
13 some other cities, but all of them have implemented
14 them a little differently.

15 And I think the biggest lesson learned from
16 us, is that there needs to be more sharing of
17 practices between the charter world and the
18 public-school world.

19 SENATOR PERKINS: Just give me an example of
20 what you mean.

21 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: We looked at, what
22 are some of the practices, or some of the
23 bottom-line philosophies?

24 I'll give you a two examples.

25 Un-Common-schools network is doing a

1 particularly strong engagement with something called
2 "relay college," that they actually formed, and that
3 does very specific training of principals and
4 teachers in professional development.

5 And we have seen that some of those schools
6 were getting good results, so we actually approached
7 them about working, particularly in District 23, 19,
8 and 17, I believe, in Brooklyn.

9 And we're piloting this year -- we've been
10 doing this for over a year -- to see if we have
11 better success using this process.

12 Another program that we hope to do, one of
13 the other charter-schools networks is doing a
14 particularly good job, not just of getting their
15 high school kids into college, but keeping them
16 there beyond freshman year.

17 And we're looking to see what they've done
18 particularly well, to be able to replicate some of
19 that work within our own high school --

20 SENATOR PERKINS: Which charter school is
21 that, by the way?

22 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: That's the
23 KIPP charter schools.

24 SENATOR PERKINS: KIPP charter schools?

25 And are there any others, other than KIPP?

1 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Well, one of these
2 schools I visited, which was the all-girls prep, was
3 doing some interesting work with departmentalization
4 in math.

5 And it was one of the places where we started
6 thinking about doing departmentalization in some
7 subjects, only in elementary school, which was not a
8 normal practice.

9 But I also want to say that I think they have
10 a lot to learn from us as well. There's a lot of
11 things that we do well.

12 So having them -- we've invited principals,
13 who want to, to be part of our district principals
14 conferences, if they choose to.

15 There are several principals who actually
16 come to the public-school principals' meeting so
17 they have someone else to talk to.

18 So I think there's a lot of common ground
19 that we can learn from each other, and I look
20 forward to seeing how else we might work together.

21 SENATOR PERKINS: So do you have a -- do you
22 do any kind of a report when you make those type of
23 analyses and those type of -- when you recognize
24 those type of successes or even failures?

25 Do you have reports that represent that?

1 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: We haven't done --

2 SENATOR PERKINS: Because if you have --

3 nothing, you said -- I'm sorry.

4 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: I said, we haven't
5 done it up until now. But --

6 SENATOR PERKINS: Well, why not?

7 If you have a thing that's working --

8 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Well, we get --
9 because we get academic results.

10 SENATOR PERKINS: You get bragging rights, to
11 be able to report that.

12 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Yeah, okay.

13 URSULINA RAMIREZ: For the charters that we
14 do authorize, because DOE is an authorizer for a
15 handful of charters, we do have reports on their
16 successes, and where they need areas of improvement.

17 SENATOR PERKINS: And the measures that --
18 and what -- and the practices and procedures that
19 have resulted in those --

20 URSULINA RAMIREZ: And their successes.

21 SENATOR PERKINS: -- then using the regular
22 traditional public school system, as you were
23 supposed to do when they were born there to begin
24 with?

25 Because, as you know, the whole purpose of

1 the charter movement --

2 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Yes, correct.

3 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Yes, was
4 innovation.

5 SENATOR PERKINS: -- was as an experiment,
6 not to proliferate, but to share moments of success,
7 practices of success, that would then improve the
8 public -- the traditional public school system.

9 In other parts of the country, that they did
10 not -- they were not able to do that.

11 URSULINA RAMIREZ: And I think --

12 SENATOR PERKINS: You claim, in
13 New York City, you've been able to do that.

14 So do you have a report that represents how
15 this charter school helped us understand how best to
16 teach kids in the regular traditional public
17 schools?

18 Do you have bragging rights that you have
19 compiled in terms of some kind of report?

20 Because if you do, that would be a good
21 thing, not just for New York City, but for other
22 parts of the country as well.

23 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Well, we just
24 started, this year, the district-charter school
25 partnerships -- which is, partially, to do exactly

1 as you say -- to ask charter schools and public
2 schools to apply for these grants, where we can
3 actually see how we each help each other.

4 I do think that the things that we learn the
5 most from are things that are truly innovative.

6 Part of the reason why we started what we
7 call the "PROS program," is to allow schools who
8 want to try some of these innovative things, to not
9 follow UFT rules, not follow DOE regulations.

10 One of the schools that we're looking at for
11 innovation is a school that decide to have four days
12 a week -- teachers working four days a week.

13 Students are in school five days, but the
14 teachers work four days a week, up until 5:00.

15 They have after-school programs that fit into
16 the program.

17 And to see if this indeed helps us with
18 teacher retention, teacher recruitment.

19 We have another school that is looking at a
20 very different way to serve special-needs kids, in
21 terms of extra support, but in a different way.

22 So I think we're trying to be very innovative
23 ourselves within our own framework.

24 We have -- we will have, at the end of this
25 year, 200 schools that are PROS schools, that are

1 going to be public schools trying something
2 different than they have in the past.

3 SENATOR PERKINS: So I just want to be clear:

4 So you have charter schools that have
5 exemplified techniques, or other kinds of ways of
6 success, that you -- that you have been able to
7 bring toward -- to traditional public schools, and
8 sort of replicate that success?

9 Do you have reports on that?

10 Because that's bragging rights.

11 And it would seem to me, that if charter
12 schools are doing wonderful things that can be done
13 in the traditional public schools, where the vast
14 majority of the kids are, then that should be
15 something that's reported, that we who are
16 interested in these schools should know about, and
17 there should be a document, what we've learned from
18 charter schools, and how they've improved our
19 traditional public schools, and why we should
20 continue in that regard.

21 URSULINA RAMIREZ: And what I --

22 SENATOR PERKINS: Kind of an idea.

23 You understand what I'm trying to say?

24 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Yes.

25 URSULINA RAMIREZ: We hear what you're --

1 SENATOR PERKINS: But as long as they've been
2 around, there's been no report that has said:
3 Charter schools are doing wonderful things. A, B,
4 C, or D is what we've learned, and look at how we've
5 been able to put that into the traditional public
6 school, where the vast majority of kids are.

7 URSULINA RAMIREZ: And the Mayor made an
8 announcement on his Equity and Excellence
9 Initiative, which was the district-charter school
10 partnership which the Chancellor just discussed.

11 And it is getting -- it is being launched for
12 this September of this upcoming year.

13 And what we can do, is develop a report to
14 talk about the successes, both from the -- and the
15 learnings that are happening within that program.

16 SENATOR PERKINS: But why haven't we done
17 that up to now?

18 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Because it's
19 individual strategies.

20 SENATOR PERKINS: The charter schools have
21 been around here for how long?

22 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: I don't know.
23 Ten years?

24 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Some around ten years.

25 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: About ten years.

1 SENATOR PERKINS: Okay, it's been a decade of
2 charters.

3 Where's the charter report on success, in
4 terms of how it has helped our traditional public
5 schools, where the vast majority of the kids go, and
6 where the whole idea of the charter was towards that
7 end?

8 That was the whole purpose of the charter:
9 Not to expand the movement so that charter
10 developments would get rich; but, rather, so that
11 the children would get rich with education.

12 So where is that report that says the riches
13 have been shared?

14 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Well, I will tell
15 you that you will have it probably next year.

16 But I will tell you that, in cases where
17 there are successes, it's a particular
18 methodology --

19 SENATOR PERKINS: But if you've been
20 compiling this information for ten years, why are we
21 now waiting till next year to get a report?

22 What stage are we in?

23 I'm just saying --

24 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: No, no,
25 I understand.

1 SENATOR PERKINS: -- because I'm bothered by
2 it, because the children who, for the most part, in
3 these schools, are children from neighborhoods that
4 I represent, even in District 3, which is not quite
5 Harlem, but it is the Upper West Side.

6 But be that as it may, and I've looked at
7 this in other countries -- not in other countries --
8 in other cities and states, particularly in Albany
9 where they all closed down, and other places of the
10 country, they're all closed down.

11 How come the ones in New York City stand, but
12 never -- as a success model, but they don't --
13 reports that brag about that, as it relates to our
14 public schools in general?

15 URSULINA RAMIREZ: We will get back to you on
16 the report.

17 SENATOR PERKINS: All right.

18 Thank you.

19 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you, Senator.

20 We've been joined by Senator Krueger, but
21 Senator Felder has a question.

22 SENATOR FELDER: Thank you.

23 Thank you very much.

24 My questions are in no particular order, so
25 you'll have to forgive me.

1 I've been trying to listen.

2 You've mentioned listening a number of times,
3 so I've been trying to listen throughout the
4 hearing.

5 You mentioned that when you -- when the Mayor
6 and you were up in Albany, you met with many people.

7 Did you meet with Senator Stewart-Cousins,
8 the leader of the Democrat Minority?

9 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: I did on the prior
10 trip to Albany, yes.

11 SENATOR FELDER: I'm talking with the Mayor.

12 When the -- when you -- and what about the
13 Assembly Leader, Carl Heastie?

14 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: The Mayor met with
15 Carl Heastie.

16 SENATOR FELDER: Okay. And what about
17 Senator Flanagan, the leader of the Majority in the
18 Senate?

19 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: I met with him on
20 a prior trip to Albany.

21 SENATOR FELDER: Did the Mayor meet with him
22 when he come up to Albany?

23 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: I have no idea.

24 SENATOR FELDER: Can you ask somebody?

25 I'm sure somebody knows the answer to that

1 question.

2 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Not on the last
3 trip.

4 SENATOR FELDER: Yeah.

5 So I think -- I think -- I think -- I think
6 that would have been a good thing.

7 I think it would have been a good thing to --
8 that the Mayor, since he's not coming to another
9 hearing. And I -- so far, I haven't heard anyone
10 explain why, and I think people are disappointed
11 that, when he was up in Albany, I think we can
12 agree, that we -- that it would have been the right
13 thing.

14 You know, this -- the topic of mayoral
15 control has become more political than -- than --
16 than real.

17 And the discussions about seven years,
18 three years, one year, this is not, in my mind --
19 I speak for myself, so I apologize to my colleagues
20 in advance -- this is not a lower --

21 SENATOR KRUEGER: We know you don't speak for
22 us. It's okay.

23 SENATOR FELDER: Thank you.

24 Thank you.

25 SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you.

1 SENATOR FELDER: You got me off track. Now
2 I don't know what I wanted to say.

3 [Laughter.]

4 SENATOR FELDER: Anyway, this is not a Lower
5 East Side bargain, where you walk into a store -- at
6 least used to -- you walked into the store and you
7 say, "How much is this suit?"

8 The guy says, "200," because he wants 100.

9 Then the other guy says, "I'm giving you 50,"
10 because he wants to pay 75.

11 So, you know, people who say, no, I --
12 I mean, I've been looking at some of the -- the --
13 you know, the testimony that's been given to us. A
14 lot of -- I've been trying to look through it.

15 I would just suggest -- I'm going to have to
16 leave soon as well -- but it would be very helpful,
17 if I had stayed longer, for people who come up to
18 testify to just start out by saying whether they're
19 in favor, or not in favor, or, they're in favor,
20 but...

21 So -- because we kept on saying about that
22 it's about the children.

23 So the years, I -- I -- in my mind, it's
24 pretty clear that we're in favor -- "we,"
25 "Simcha Felder," I'm in favor of mayoral control.

1 And the only question is about improving.
2 You know, highlighting the things that work well,
3 and highlighting the things that can be improved.

4 So the -- the -- a lot of the discussions --
5 and I'm looking at you only because I'm about to ask
6 you questions, but it's not addressed to you --
7 I think this is -- a lot of the discussions that
8 have been taking place are political dreck.

9 And for those that don't know what that
10 means, that's a Yiddish term for garbage, trash, or
11 anything else you want.

12 So, in my mind, I think that it's important
13 to focus on the education issues specifically,
14 because one of the -- one of the people who was
15 testifying had something called a "report card," and
16 I think it's pretty good.

17 I don't necessarily agree with their
18 assessment, but they go through items, such as,
19 education, special transparency, accountability,
20 special education, things like that.

21 And that's what I think -- that's the focus.

22 So having said that, and feeling a little
23 better getting that off my mind, so what I wanted to
24 know is, I'm curious, the mayoral-control issue,
25 really, the groundwork for that was laid by

1 Mayor Giuliani.

2 I think that, without that, Mayor Bloomberg
3 would never have been able to do it.

4 During that time -- I understand that you've
5 been in education, an educator, for many, many
6 years.

7 During that time, were you in favor of
8 mayoral control of the system?

9 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: I think in terms
10 of the stability of the system, I've always wanted
11 that to be part of it.

12 I also --

13 SENATOR FELDER: Yeah, but that wasn't my
14 question.

15 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: -- I think that,
16 certainly, as a superintendent, I felt that it was
17 important to not have a patronage system, where
18 principals were often chosen for political reasons.

19 So that mayoral control did take that away.

20 SENATOR FELDER: All right. You and I know
21 that you don't want to answer the question, so
22 I won't ask it to you a third time.

23 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: No, I will say,
24 yes, definitely, in the sense that there was too
25 much patronage in the system, and people got jobs

1 they were not necessarily qualified for.

2 And with mayoral control, I think putting
3 superintendents in charge of picking principals is a
4 much better system in education.

5 SENATOR FELDER: Okay. I apologize.

6 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: No, that's okay.

7 SENATOR FELDER: Thank you for answering the
8 question.

9 What -- so -- you know, when you go on
10 interviews, they always ask you, What's your
11 weakness?

12 Right?

13 So I'd like to ask you: What do you think
14 are problems that have to be addressed in the
15 education system as it is?

16 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Oh, my goodness.

17 We could have a whole other hearing on this.

18 I think making sure that --

19 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Don't encourage me.

20 [Laughter.]

21 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: I think the most
22 important thing is that everyone has to see
23 themselves invested, and need to support public
24 education.

25 This is not parents who need to be invested.

1 This is everyone.

2 The CEOs of companies.

3 Public -- everyone has to see public
4 education as an investment.

5 And I think, for too long, we've only tried
6 to get parents and educators involved.

7 It's got to be everybody, and it's got to be
8 everybody working together, because we're not going
9 to have the workforce of tomorrow if not everyone is
10 invested.

11 So I would say that's one of the things that
12 is a real challenge, and it's one of the reasons,
13 also, we have expanded the groups of people we speak
14 to.

15 I actually meet with COs. I meet with the
16 New York City Partnership.

17 Everyone needs to understand the importance
18 of public education.

19 SENATOR FELDER: Okay.

20 I don't want to forget to thank you, and
21 thank the Mayor, for the good -- all the good work,
22 clearly.

23 And I just want to tell the Chair, I did get
24 a response to my question.

25 My mother always said I was special.

1 So, I did get a response to my question.

2 But this question, you didn't answer me.

3 I'm asking you, I want to know, what you
4 believe are the weaknesses in your educational
5 system at this time that should be improved.

6 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Well, I certainly
7 think our work with special-needs students and
8 English-language learners needs, you know, more
9 concentration.

10 It's not because we're not trying, but it's
11 just a very heavy lift.

12 I think, also, you know, kids in temporary
13 housing and homeless shelters; big, big issue.

14 And with all the support we're putting in it,
15 it's almost like something that requires 24/7 kind
16 of attention. So I think that's it.

17 I think one of the other major challenges is
18 also recruitment of the best teachers, and making
19 sure, particularly teachers to work with
20 special-needs kids and English-language learners, we
21 want to increase our dual-language programs, but we
22 don't have enough teachers who speak two languages
23 in academic ways.

24 So there's a lot of challenges. There's
25 enough challenges to keep me busy for a very, very

1 long time.

2 But I think focusing on the successes,
3 I mean, one of the things we've been doing a lot is
4 partnering schools that are successful in something.

5 So, learning-partner showcase schools; so
6 schools that have solved a problem, that can be
7 partnered with another school who has the same
8 problem.

9 But, challenges, there are more than enough
10 to go around.

11 SENATOR FELDER: I would just say that, when
12 somebody like me asks you what your weakness is,
13 that may be a compliment, because it's clear to me
14 that there have been many successes, without
15 question.

16 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Thank you.

17 SENATOR FELDER: On another topic: Last
18 time, when you were in Albany with the Mayor,
19 I asked what the ratio of psychologists-to-student
20 is in the system.

21 I'm wondering whether you have that
22 information?

23 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Actually I do. One
24 second.

25 SENATOR FELDER: Thank you.

1 So I'll go on to the next question.

2 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: And we've
3 increased the number in this particular budget.

4 SENATOR FELDER: I'll go on to the next
5 question while you find that.

6 I am concerned that, although the City has
7 invested tremendous amounts of money in protecting
8 our children, the issue of terrorism is on
9 everyone's mind.

10 And at this point, in the city schools, we
11 have security officers that do not carry guns. They
12 are unarmed.

13 Now, I'm -- I -- I am very concerned that --
14 that, you know, a Brinks truck picking up \$1 million
15 from a bank has two guys, carrying guns, and that
16 the schools do not have officers carrying guns.

17 I want to know what you think about that.

18 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: This would
19 certainly not be one of the things that I would
20 pursue.

21 We -- when we have emergencies, we call our
22 NYPD that we work very closely.

23 But I don't think having school safety
24 officers carrying guns is the answer to any of these
25 problems.

1 SENATOR FELDER: What do you think is the
2 answer?

3 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: I think
4 better-trained school safety officers, which we
5 already have.

6 Our crime is down 29 percent.

7 You know, anything can happen at any time and
8 anyplace.

9 But I do believe that we have very good rules
10 and regulations on how you enter a building.

11 They know who I am, and yet I have to show ID
12 when I go into a building.

13 And I think that -- the things that we have
14 in place right now are fine.

15 Having more guns in schools is not the answer
16 to this issue.

17 SENATOR FELDER: Well, I wasn't suggesting
18 that the kids should have guns.

19 I hope you know that.

20 SENATOR MARCELLINO: In terms of your other
21 question, it's one to 133 students.

22 SENATOR FELDER: You have 1 psychologist for
23 every 133 students?

24 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: That doesn't count
25 guidance counselors and other -- and social workers.

1 Remember, there are many categories of
2 student-support people.

3 SENATOR FELDER: And what was the number a
4 year ago? Do you know?

5 URSULINA RAMIREZ: I will get you the number
6 from last year.

7 SENATOR FELDER: If you don't mind, I'll
8 continue with the questions.

9 I'm just curious, how many schools have you
10 visited in my district?

11 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Your -- I don't
12 know specifically by district, but by this time,
13 I have visited over 200 schools. Probably more.

14 SENATOR FELDER: But I had to ask you a
15 question that's self-centered entirely.

16 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Be my guest.

17 SENATOR FELDER: You know that.

18 So I want to know how many schools you --

19 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Is there a
20 specific school in your district you want --

21 SENATOR FELDER: No. I just want to continue
22 feeling special.

23 I want to know how many schools you visited
24 in my district.

25 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: I can't give you

1 that number.

2 I mean, I have a school tracking record, that
3 I actually write every school I visited to, so I'm
4 happy to send that to you. I can do it from --

5 SENATOR FELDER: Yes.

6 But I don't want to know how many schools you
7 visited.

8 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: No, no. I will
9 let you know, specifically in your district --

10 SENATOR FELDER: I want to know how many of
11 Simcha's schools you visited, please.

12 SENATOR KRUEGER: Can I make a friendly
13 amendment?

14 SENATOR FELDER: Yes.

15 SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you.

16 He's ceding time.

17 We all want to feel special.

18 So if you get him an answer, get us all
19 answers.

20 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Okay, I will.

21 SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you.

22 SENATOR FELDER: Why did you some come so
23 early?

24 SENATOR KRUEGER: I thought I came quite
25 late.

1 I thought you would be done, but, no.

2 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Move on.

3 SENATOR FELDER: You've been very helpful to
4 me.

5 Another -- one other issue, is the discussion
6 about schools for children that will not to go
7 college, and who are extremely talented, but don't
8 have any patience to sit.

9 I consider myself one of those people.

10 So years ago, they had schools that taught
11 trades. And, you know, there's been so much
12 discussion about Common Core.

13 At the end of the day, a certain amount of
14 the population will never do well on any of those
15 tests because God did not create these kids to sit
16 anywhere. That they have their own talents, and
17 will be brilliant plumbers, mechanics, painters, or
18 whatever else.

19 So I'm just wondering if there's anything
20 that you can do or speak towards, bringing back some
21 of that, so that -- so that a kid that may not be a
22 mathematician, but will be a great contractor and
23 earn a good livelihood, doesn't have to feel like
24 there's something wrong with them when they go to
25 school.

1 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: I'm so glad you
2 asked.

3 We have invested in 40 new, and strengthening
4 the ones we have, what we call "CTE" programs.

5 CTE programs are multiple pathways.

6 That means, that you can go to college,
7 you're still college-ready, but, if you choose to go
8 directly into a trade, that's fine.

9 I mean, for example -- and, in fact, I think
10 it was in your district, I went to something this
11 Saturday, and I met with the head of the carpenters
12 union. And one of the things that he told me, which
13 I did not know, that the carpenters union also
14 includes the divers union, because divers are
15 carpenters underwater. And that jobs from the
16 divers -- from divers start at \$80,000 a year.

17 So we -- right away, we exchanged cards.
18 And, I already have someone meeting with him,
19 because we not only -- and this is why I talk about
20 everyone has to be involved -- we have to get the
21 unions more involved in working in our high schools
22 and in our colleges, because having a union card --
23 the plumbers, the carpenters, union -- all these are
24 jobs for the future, and I think it's really
25 important.

1 Our CTE programs in pharma -- that's why
2 I said I need your help.

3 We can create even more CTE programs if the
4 state laws would change to allow the degrees or
5 licensing for people.

6 Like, for example, if you have a pharmacy
7 program, it's a classroom teacher, but it's a
8 pharmacist.

9 If it's a health program, it's someone in the
10 health.

11 And we cannot hire them long enough -- enough
12 because the State has not processed these.

13 So this is something we really want to work
14 on.

15 I definitely --

16 SENATOR FELDER: Yeah, I like the answer to
17 that question, because I happen to have
18 legislation -- proposed legislation on some of
19 the -- what you discussed.

20 So, again, I want to just end my questions by
21 thanking you, and thanking the Mayor, for the good
22 work that's been done, and look forward for -- to
23 improvements.

24 And thank you, Mr. Chair.

25 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you, Senator.

1 At this point in time, all the members who
2 have indicated they wish to question have done so,
3 and we'll mercifully let you go, to get back to
4 your -- the schools and running of the schools.

5 I just want to reiterate: I would have
6 preferred -- no offense -- Mayor de Blasio being
7 here. His testimony, his answering these kind of
8 questions, in concert with you, would have been much
9 more helpful to this Committee, and would have
10 spoken volumes about the system and about mayoral
11 control.

12 That was what we're here about:

13 What is the Mayor's input?

14 How does the Mayor handle this?

15 What would the Mayor be doing?

16 How has it made a difference to have mayoral
17 control?

18 Your testimony, fantastic. I appreciate it.

19 But we needed to hear from him. We needed
20 follow-up questions to be heard from him.

21 We have questions, which we've given you
22 copies of, that need to be answered; and, hopefully,
23 we'll get them.

24 You don't have to do it right now, but if you
25 can get it to us, to my office, and I'll distribute

1 it to the members who have asked for them, make sure
2 everybody gets a copy, what's proposed for them, so
3 there's no loss in that.

4 But, again, I reiterate: It would have --
5 this would have been a better situation if the Mayor
6 were here to defend his -- and I don't mean defend
7 in a negative way -- but to defend his running of
8 the city schools; that, I think is an imperative for
9 us.

10 Thank you again.

11 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Well, I thank you
12 for the opportunity.

13 And I know I speak for the Mayor as well when
14 I say, in this particular situation, we really are
15 very united in terms of wanting stability, and to do
16 what's best for the students of the city of
17 New York.

18 So, thank you very much.

19 I look forward to many more conversations.

20 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Moving right along, is
21 Dennis Walcott here?

22 I know he was here earlier.

23 He left?

24 Mark Cannizzaro, executive vice president of
25 CSA?

1 Mark.

2 MARK CANNIZZARO: Good morning.

3 Are you ready?

4 SENATOR MARCELLINO: We're ready.

5 MARK CANNIZZARO: Okay, great.

6 Good morning, Senator Marcellino, members of
7 the Senate Education Committee.

8 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Will the young lady
9 who's leaning against the door jamb please stop,
10 because you're turning lights on and off?

11 Thank you very much.

12 Is there a possibility of getting a piece of
13 tape put over that switch?

14 There is tape put over the switch?

15 How about an electric prod?

16 [Laughter.]

17 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

18 I'm sorry.

19 MARK CANNIZZARO: That's okay.

20 My name is Mark Cannizzaro. I'm the
21 executive vice president of the Council for School
22 Supervisors and Administrators.

23 We are the union that represents school
24 principals and assistant principals, as well as
25 educational administrators, here in New York City.

1 We thank you for this opportunity.

2 We thank you for holding it in our backyard.
3 It does, certainly, make it convenient for us.

4 I will take Senator Felder's advice and tell
5 you that we are in support of continued mayoral
6 control of the school system.

7 I will further take his advice and say that
8 we are also in support of some refinements to the
9 current system.

10 We would like to see mayoral control
11 extended, but not made permanent, at least not yet,
12 if it is considered at some point.

13 We are looking for some refinements to the
14 composition of the -- what's currently called the
15 PEP (the Panel of Educational Policy), per the
16 board's bylaws.

17 And we also are looking for some expansion of
18 the authority of the current community education
19 councils.

20 Much of what I heard, while I was waiting,
21 are some of the things that we support.

22 We would like to see composition of the panel
23 changed slightly, to a panel that has seven
24 appointees by the Mayor, rather than eight; with the
25 retention of the requirements that are currently

1 part of the panel's policy, to have at least two
2 parents selected who have had children attend public
3 schools and/or a student who was a public-school
4 student within the last two years, to be part of the
5 Mayor's selections.

6 We would like to see continued appointees,
7 one by each borough president; the five borough
8 presidents each be able to select.

9 And we would like the thirteenth selection to
10 be a selection of the City Council. We feel that
11 this change would give the City Council a voice at
12 all PEP meetings, and be able to directly influence
13 policy before anything got to them for any type of
14 debate.

15 We support the continued authority of the PEP
16 with mayor -- with the current statute, as far as
17 relating to proposed regulations, capital plan,
18 operating funds, allocations, and revenues --

19 (Audio/visual transmission stops.)

20 (Audio/visual resumes, in progress.)

21 MARK CANNIZZARO: -- closing and/or
22 consolidation of schools in their districts.

23 Again, their vote, either for or against,
24 could be reversed by a majority vote of the central
25 board.

1 We just feel that will increase their
2 authority, and create a stronger connection to
3 parents in the community, that we think is -- has
4 improved, but is still a little bit lacking.

5 For that reason, CSA would certainly like to
6 see the continuation of mayoral control.

7 We do strongly advocate for the changes that
8 we've asked for.

9 And, finally, we feel, probably, the
10 number-one reason that we're advocating for this is,
11 when we have a question, a problem, a suggestion,
12 we're able to go to one place and have that
13 discussion.

14 Thank you.

15 SENATOR ADDABBO: Mr. Cannizzaro --

16 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Just before, make note
17 of the fact that we did invite the UFT to attend
18 both hearings. They have declined to attend.

19 SENATOR ADDABBO: Mr. Cannizzaro, thank you
20 very much for your time here today, and I really
21 appreciate your suggestions, because like
22 I mentioned to the Chancellor, when something like
23 mayoral controls expires, we have the opportunity to
24 certainly make improvements to the system.

25 So I thank you for your suggestions.

1 We have seen many administrative changes over
2 the years with mayoral control, one of them being
3 the role of the principal.

4 And all due respect to superintendents,
5 superintendents have a lot of schools under their
6 authority and a lot of schools to be interested in.

7 But the principal has one school: their own.

8 Can you see a change in the authority or the
9 role the principal changes as we go through possibly
10 improving mayoral control?

11 MARK CANNIZZARO: Well, I don't think that
12 whether or not we have mayoral control speaks to the
13 authority of the principal.

14 We have, obviously, and always, been strong
15 supporters on the principal being the person that
16 makes the decisions for his or her building.

17 You know, there's been a lot of talk about
18 autonomy, and the autonomy of a principal.

19 CSA believes that, when someone is selected
20 as a principal, that means they've earned autonomy,
21 and should be able to operate their buildings as
22 such.

23 Now, of course, just like we're asking for in
24 mayoral control, checks and balances on everyone is
25 certainly important and necessary.

1 But I think that that is more a -- that
2 question that you've asked does not relate to
3 mayoral control as much as it relates to
4 philosophies and things of the times.

5 So, you know, as far as mayoral control is
6 concerned, we still think we -- there's certainly
7 more autonomy and more ability to run a building
8 than there was in the previous system, for those of
9 us who have been around long enough.

10 SENATOR ADDABBO: I only mention because
11 previous changes to mayoral control has had changes
12 within the roles, not only the parents, but also
13 teachers and administrators.

14 So, that's why I had mentioned it.

15 But, again, I thank you for your input and
16 your insight, and for your time here today.

17 MARK CANNIZZARO: Thank you.

18 SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you.

19 Thank you very much.

20 MARK CANNIZZARO: Thank you, Senator.

21 SENATOR KRUEGER: I read your testimony
22 before you got here, and I appreciated your
23 recommendations for how we could make changes that
24 would, I think, broaden the participation of others
25 concerned about education.

1 So I am hoping that, in discussions of
2 mayoral control, we might, some day, get to
3 substance, and not just the politics, as my
4 colleague Senator Feldman (sic) pointed out.

5 But I'm curious: You don't think that the
6 Department of Education should be brought under the
7 same standards as other city agencies for
8 procurement?

9 Because that's been one of my concerns: that
10 procurement ought to go through the same process as
11 other city agencies, with normal auditing and review
12 process.

13 The principals don't -- aren't concerned with
14 that currently.

15 MARK CANNIZZARO: Well, I have to plead
16 ignorance to knowing the exact, you know, procedures
17 that the other agencies go through.

18 But we don't -- we feel that by making any
19 tweaks that we've recommended, we think we can keep
20 those checks and balances in place.

21 I do happen to agree a little bit -- a bit
22 with the Chancellor, what she said earlier, is this
23 particular PEP has been quite diligent when it comes
24 to contracts and procurement, probably more so than
25 we've seen in the past.

1 So, I don't -- wouldn't say that's been a
2 concern, no.

3 SENATOR KRUEGER: And then, I think it was in
4 a previous administration, there was, once upon a
5 time, a proposal that principals would be provided
6 a -- almost an administrative principal, to work
7 side-by-side with them, so that you as principals
8 could focus on the education, the students, the
9 teachers, the classroom. And then recognizing the
10 enormous administrative responsibilities you have
11 over the schools, provide you someone who could take
12 on those challenges.

13 I always thought that sounded like a great
14 model.

15 I am so admiring of the work that principals
16 do.

17 And I think all of us who work in our
18 communities know, when you have a good principal,
19 you have a school that functions; and when you
20 don't, you have problems.

21 So I'm wondering where you all are on that
22 once-upon-a-time proposal?

23 MARK CANNIZZARO: Anything this body can do
24 to help that along the way, we would certainly
25 appreciate.

1 SENATOR KRUEGER: And that model doesn't
2 exist now anywhere?

3 MARK CANNIZZARO: No. It -- some of the high
4 schools have what we call "assistant principals in
5 charge of organization," and they do a lot of the
6 work that you're referring to; but, yet, the
7 administrative burdens on a principal are so huge.

8 We just sent a survey out, and the number-one
9 comment about what could help folks improve their
10 jobs, would be taking away some of the enormous
11 workload, as far as paperwork and organization,
12 administrative types of things.

13 So, as far as a principal and instructional
14 leaders in the building, other assistant principals
15 being able to get in the classrooms and really help
16 move instruction, something like that would be
17 certainly welcomed with open arms.

18 SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you.

19 MARK CANNIZZARO: You're welcome.

20 SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you.

21 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Bill, do you have a
22 question?

23 SENATOR PERKINS: You know, most folks are
24 really preoccupied with salary and benefits, and so
25 forth.

1 And as principals, you -- I guess you run the
2 whole operation in the system.

3 Do you -- so how do you all -- what is your
4 take on these charters?

5 I know it's about salaries and benefits, and
6 such and so forth, but what's the story with -- how
7 do -- how are charters doing with you guys?

8 MARK CANNIZZARO: So we -- first of all, CSA
9 represents a small group of, I think, about nine
10 charter schools.

11 So --

12 SENATOR PERKINS: How are they measuring up?

13 MARK CANNIZZARO: Oh, they're doing quite
14 well.

15 The charters that we represent are
16 independent charter schools, so they're all
17 independent in what we call "conversion charters."

18 So, at one point --

19 SENATOR PERKINS: Could you explain what that
20 means?

21 MARK CANNIZZARO: Sure.

22 So, they are single -- single operations.

23 Okay?

24 And they were converted from one -- at one
25 time, they were New York City public schools.

1 Okay, so now they've converted into charter
2 schools.

3 Several years back, before I be -- before
4 I came to CSA, is when they converted, but we've
5 been working with them quite closely.

6 We actually think that the conversation has
7 to be a little bit more about what you were alluding
8 to earlier, I think, Senator.

9 We want to be able to put some of the
10 rhetoric aside that we hear all the time.

11 These -- the children that go to our schools
12 are our kids, and they are learning.

13 Some students, in both places, learning
14 better than other students, and being given better
15 opportunities.

16 And we want to be able to have an open and
17 honest discussion, without the politics and the
18 rhetoric and all of these things that have seemed
19 to -- seem to dominate the press lately.

20 If there is something that can help my
21 school, when I was a school principal, I don't care
22 where I'm learning it from; I'm happy to learn it.

23 And I think that most people feel that way.

24 But we've gotten to this argument now, where
25 one has to be better than the other, or not.

1 And that is what is dominating right now:
2 It's, what's better?

3 And I don't think one system is necessarily
4 better; or one child, because they go to a
5 particular brand of school, is getting a better
6 education than another.

7 I think we can all learn from each other, and
8 we should all learn from each other.

9 SENATOR PERKINS: I guess I would agree with
10 that, except that, at some point, you have to
11 measure what folks are doing, to determine whether
12 or not it's actually better.

13 And then the fact, if it is, take that lesson
14 and replicate it, so that those who are not doing so
15 better can do better.

16 MARK CANNIZZARO: That's 100 percent correct.

17 SENATOR PERKINS: That's the genius of that
18 opportunity.

19 And, so, the whole idea of the charter school
20 was that they would be better, and that they would
21 teach us how to teach our children to do better.

22 So there would be lessons learned that could
23 be replicated and provided to the other students
24 that might not have those opportunities.

25 And so that's my concern, is what are we

1 learning from this model that is supposed to be
2 there to teach us how to do better?

3 MARK CANNIZZARO: We're going to have a hard
4 time -- we're going to have hard -- I agree with
5 what you just said, as far as, you know, being able
6 to learn and being able to measure.

7 But we're going to have the hard time
8 measuring anything, accurately and honestly, when
9 the discussion is "us verse you," because everyone
10 is trying to protect their piece of the pie when
11 that happens, and that's not a good thing.

12 And that's what's happening right now, it's
13 that discussion.

14 So no one is going to let their guard down
15 and say, Hey, you know what? Yeah.

16 You know -- and that's the issue that we have
17 right now.

18 SENATOR PERKINS: So with all due respect,
19 I agree with you, but I don't think that that's what
20 I'm saying.

21 I'm just saying that, the whole idea of the
22 charter movement was that it would be not a second
23 set of per se; but, rather, an opportunity for us --
24 for the educators to get some models of success that
25 can be replicated; not necessarily a

1 one-size-fits-all, but, you know -- but, you know,
2 what can work.

3 And instead of learning from those, quote,
4 labs of experimental opportunity, they've duplicated
5 themselves, without letting us know what the benefit
6 was that could be replicated.

7 And, so, folks are making large salaries, and
8 contracts, and -- but when you look at the success
9 of the students, they're not measuring up.

10 And I don't want to dismiss any of those that
11 are, but, generally speaking, they're not
12 competitive in the way that they were expected to
13 be.

14 MARK CANNIZZARO: Well, I don't think we're
15 disagreeing as much as you think we're disagreeing.

16 I think a lot of what we're saying is the
17 same, and I agree.

18 Look, you're -- when you have any type of
19 system, any type of new experimental type of things,
20 different -- different procedures, different ways to
21 educate children, not every one of those ways is
22 going to measure up. Right?

23 And some of our schools in New York City are
24 doing a wonderful job at a lot of things, and that
25 needs to be replicated also.

1 SENATOR PERKINS: Sure, sure.

2 MARK CANNIZZARO: Right?

3 And that's one of the things that I think we
4 are trying to do with some of the programs we have,
5 both, interacting with charter schools, and that's
6 just in the beginning, as well as interacting with
7 each other, and to replicate some best practices,
8 because best practices can be replicated in lots of
9 different places and lots of different areas.

10 But I do agree with you, that what the
11 intention is, and was, needs to be brought back into
12 focus, so that we can do exactly what we're supposed
13 to do.

14 And all children can benefit from something
15 that is beneficial in any building, whether it's a
16 traditional district school or a charter school or
17 any other type of building where children are
18 learning.

19 SENATOR MARCELLINO: The line of questioning
20 is interesting, but, can we bring this back to
21 mayoral control?

22 SENATOR PERKINS: Well, the essence of this
23 stems from mayoral control, because, without it, you
24 wouldn't have it.

25 It was the dictatorial behavior of the

1 Bloomberg Administration that brought this into the
2 system.

3 That's why I'm bringing it up.

4 And there's never really been the kind of
5 review of it, to measure whether or not --

6 SENATOR MARCELLINO: That we could do -- we
7 could do in another hearing, and I don't mind doing
8 it, because I think --

9 SENATOR PERKINS: -- but I'm saying, mayoral
10 control is --

11 SENATOR MARCELLINO: -- I think your point is
12 well-taken --

13 SENATOR PERKINS: -- what's measuring -- is
14 what -- is why we're at this point.

15 SENATOR MARCELLINO: How is this --

16 SENATOR PERKINS: And so this is one of the
17 flowerings of mayoral control, which is the
18 charters.

19 But this is the Bloomberg's legacy that I'm
20 talking about.

21 MARK CANNIZZARO: So if --

22 SENATOR PERKINS: This is what he was
23 bragging about.

24 MARK CANNIZZARO: -- if -- if you --

25 SENATOR PERKINS: So I just want to make sure

1 that, if it works, then let's replicate it.

2 And if it doesn't work, then, that's it.

3 MARK CANNIZZARO: -- if the concern is about
4 one person having too much authority and control,
5 then I think some of the suggestions that we've
6 placed in here does help to --

7 SENATOR PERKINS: Let me -- let me -- in
8 response to that, let me just be -- it's not about
9 the control. It's about whether or not the model
10 works.

11 Not control.

12 MARK CANNIZZARO: Right.

13 SENATOR PERKINS: Okay?

14 If this model works, it has lessons, it has
15 practices, it has procedures, whatever -- however
16 you want to describe it, that can be replicated.
17 Right?

18 Let's -- where is that at?

19 MARK CANNIZZARO: That's what I -- I just
20 told you, we need to do better at replicating
21 everywhere. Not just there, but everywhere.

22 SENATOR PERKINS: No, but that was
23 specifically what that was for.

24 MARK CANNIZZARO: Okay.

25 SENATOR PERKINS: That was what the folks

1 thought was gonna happen, and that way, it would be
2 replicated throughout the system.

3 MARK CANNIZZARO: Right. Like I said,
4 I think we're agreeing more --

5 SENATOR PERKINS: Where is the report that
6 says: A, B, C, we learned. X, Y, Z.

7 MARK CANNIZZARO: You asked that question
8 earlier, and, you know, that report is not going to
9 come from the CSA.

10 But I believe that report should be
11 forthcoming, hopefully, from another agency.

12 SENATOR PERKINS: Thank you.

13 MARK CANNIZZARO: You're welcome.

14 SENATOR MARCELLINO: How many times do you
15 meet with the mayor, relative -- or any other union,
16 colleagues, relative to mayoral control, relative to
17 the city schools?

18 MARK CANNIZZARO: So Earnest Logan, our
19 president, meets with the Mayor from time to time.

20 To be honest with you, I couldn't give you a
21 specific number, but I wouldn't say that it's less
22 than four or five times in the last year.

23 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Specifically dealing
24 with non-contract mayoral control?

25 MARK CANNIZZARO: Dealing with a host of

1 issues, and I'm sure that that is included, yes.

2 SENATOR MARCELLINO: All right.

3 Thank you.

4 MARK CANNIZZARO: Thank you very much.

5 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Any other questions?

6 Thank you for your testimony. We appreciate
7 your coming.

8 MARK CANNIZZARO: And thank you for your
9 time.

10 SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you very much.

11 SENATOR MARCELLINO: The next group would be,
12 Teresa Arboleda, Ellen McHugh, and Mona Davids.

13 And again I would ask, the people testifying,
14 that we not read the testimony.

15 We have it. It will be made part of the
16 record.

17 But we would appreciate it if you could
18 summarize it, so we can get to the questions, and
19 I think that would be the most important part of it.

20 Thank you.

21 Start whenever you wish.

22 TERESA ARBOLEDA: Good afternoon.

23 My name is Teresa Arboleda, and I was a
24 former school-board member, a former CEC member, and
25 now I'm the chair of the Citywide Council on

1 English-Language Learners.

2 As Carmen Fariña, I'm also a former
3 English-language learner, although I was born and
4 raised here. And my parents were also immigrants
5 from Spain.

6 I'm also the president of the -- the chair of
7 the legislative committee of the Education Council
8 Consortium. It's a group that was formed,
9 I believe, in early 2013, and it's comprised of
10 members of the CECs and citywide councils, and we
11 meet regularly with the Chancellor, and we address
12 issues that affect the schools and communities in
13 all the boroughs.

14 The ECC, we were made aware about mayoral
15 control expiring, and we decided to form a committee
16 and explore, and discuss, the ramifications and pros
17 and cons about mayoral control.

18 And after a lot of discussion, we developed a
19 resolution, and -- on May 23, 2015, before the last
20 expiration.

21 And the basic idea is that, while we're not
22 supportive of extending mayoral control, we do offer
23 amendments in case it is renewed.

24 And the ideal situation would have been to
25 hold extensive hearings with parents and schools,

1 and get different ideas, but, I don't think that is
2 happening.

3 The issue of mayoral control cannot be about
4 a particular mayor. It should be about the
5 students.

6 And any system of governance must have checks
7 and balances.

8 And we cannot have a new school system every
9 time there's a new mayor.

10 It's not about the mayor.

11 It's important for the parents to know where
12 to go when they have problems.

13 And the best way to do that is to have local
14 districts and local staff, local superintendents,
15 within the geographical area of where people live
16 and the schools.

17 When mayoral control was first implemented,
18 it was -- the system was turned upside down.

19 Parents didn't know what was happening. They
20 didn't know what was going on. It was barely
21 explained.

22 That's why we are so concerned about the
23 governance of mayoral control, the system.

24 It's not about the mayor.

25 We cannot have a corporate structure.

1 The next mayor may want to have a corporate
2 structure like the previous mayor.

3 We believe that students are not just data.
4 They are people, and they're not to be passed around
5 like chess pieces.

6 I mean, the enrollment procedures that were
7 in effect was, they were just numbers.

8 Oh, this kid fits here. This kid fits here.

9 No paying attention as to what that child's
10 needs were.

11 We can't fall into the trap of
12 one-size-fits-all.

13 We believe the present administration has
14 made positive changes, and these changes should be
15 firmly established by the law so that we can
16 maintain stability and not be thrown into turmoil
17 again.

18 Some of these changes that we like, these are
19 not the only ones, but these are very important
20 ones:

21 The appointment of a chancellor who was an
22 educator.

23 The increased parental access to parents in
24 the local geographic district.

25 Sensitivity to the needs of English-language

1 learners.

2 I can speak to that as president of the
3 council.

4 They have expanded interpretation and
5 translation services. There are more English
6 classes for parents who don't speak English.

7 And, there's a less-contentious process for
8 co-locations.

9 I'm a parent. I was on the CEC in District 3
10 when all the co-locations so-called "hearings" were
11 conducted, and I can tell you it was not fun.

12 The resolution that you have before you, it
13 reflects the wide opinions of the ECC members, but
14 these are the most important points that we want to
15 make.

16 And we hope the Legislature considers these
17 amendments to the law.

18 The law should provide for the appointment of
19 the PEP members to fixed terms. This will allow the
20 PEP members to vote independently and not be afraid
21 that they will be removed for a vote.

22 People who have been in the system for a
23 while remember the "Monday Night Massacre."

24 I think you all know about it.

25 A vote was scheduled, and there were

1 X numbers on the panel. And then, when we went to
2 the meeting, they were gone, and they were replaced.

3 We cannot have a mayor with absolute power.
4 They're not a dictator.

5 Also, the public advocate has a report which
6 agrees with this recommendation.

7 She also recommends that parents representing
8 English-language learners, special ed, and a
9 public-advocate appointee also be added to the PEP
10 as members.

11 The method of electing parents to the CEC is
12 not democratic.

13 You only have three officers of the PTA, or
14 PA, voting for members.

15 Some people get on with just one vote.

16 Not that they beat other people by one vote.

17 By just one vote.

18 They just get one vote, and they get on, and
19 that's very undemocratic.

20 So I think we should have all the parents of
21 the geographical district under the superintendent
22 be able to vote, just the public-school parents.

23 Also, the role of the superintendent, it must
24 be clearly defined that they are the educational
25 leader of that district -- of that geographical

1 district.

2 You cannot have network leaders who are in
3 Manhattan, traveling to Queens, Staten Island,
4 The Bronx, whatever.

5 So that is very important because, then, now
6 the parents know that if they have a problem, it's
7 in their local district.

8 Half the time, the parents didn't know who
9 the network leader was.

10 Also, the law should be amended.

11 I know, right now, they say the chancellor
12 must be an educator and needs a waiver.

13 We don't think there should be a waiver.

14 The chancellor must be an educator.

15 They know -- only an educator knows what to
16 do with the schools.

17 And, also, the public-advocate report also
18 indicates that they favor this.

19 Also, the two-year terms that now are in the
20 law, we believe strongly that they should be changed
21 to three years, because a lot of parents don't know
22 what's going on. They don't realize, this is what
23 I can do, this is what I can't do.

24 And by the time they know what to do,
25 there -- the -- there's another election.

1 So I remember, when I was on the school
2 board, it was a three-year term.

3 So I just think that would be more feasible.

4 Also, I -- I, as an English-language-learner
5 advocate, when the councils -- when the law was
6 changed the last time for the councils to allow for
7 a seat on each local district, and when the Citywide
8 Council on English-Language Learners was formed, it
9 was very difficult to get parents, because,
10 according to the law, you needed to be an ELL
11 parent.

12 And most of them are not aware. You know, if
13 they're immigrants, or they don't speak English,
14 they're not aware of what they can do to participate
15 to engage.

16 So a couple years ago, we proposed a change
17 in the law.

18 And, Denny O'Donnell, and it was co-sponsored
19 by Senator Lanza, we changed the law, that parents
20 be allowed to serve after they've been out
21 two years, you know, after they've received
22 services.

23 It's much better, but, it's still not that
24 great.

25 We believe that a parent who has been an ELL

1 at any time.

2 In other words, if the parent is in the
3 eighth grade now, the kid is in the eighth grade,
4 and they want to go, or, the sixth grade, and they
5 were ELLs in the third grade, and now they're not.

6 We think that parents -- I mean, I -- I'm a
7 grandma, and I'm still interested in that issue.

8 So I don't think they will lose at -- you
9 know, the desire to advocate for those parents
10 because they're out of the system, the ELL services.

11 And, there's also -- there are also issues on
12 special ed that my colleague Ellen McHugh will
13 address, and there two are different areas that she
14 will address.

15 And I will read this:

16 Mayoral control cannot be made permanent, and
17 must be reviewed periodically. We cannot have the
18 budget dance when mayoral control is included as a
19 part of the budget.

20 The governance policy, where the mayor
21 controls the New York City public schools, must be
22 thoroughly debated on its own.

23 The over one million students in
24 New York City public schools cannot be held hostage
25 to whatever political winds are blowing at the time.

1 As an entity with knowledge and experience
2 with New York City public schools, the ECC is
3 committed to working with the New York State
4 Legislature to achieve the most equitable and fair
5 governance system that will benefit the students in
6 our public schools.

7 And we can be contacted; we would love to
8 work with you.

9 ELLEN McHUGH: Flexibility is the hallmark of
10 parent cooperation.

11 My name is Ellen McHugh.

12 I currently serve as one of the
13 public-advocate appointees to the Citywide Council
14 on Special Ed.

15 A good deal of what Theresa has said is
16 always also what I would have said, although, and
17 I thank you for the invitation.

18 I'm really surprised I'm here, unless it's to
19 echo what Teresa is saying, which is a compliment,
20 and I thank you for inviting us.

21 One of the problems with mayoral control, as
22 I see it now, is the issue of whimsy.

23 On the whim of a mayor in the past, actions
24 by the Citywide Council on Special Education were
25 ignored.

1 On the whim of a mayor now, actions by the
2 Citywide Council on Special Education were accepted.

3 One of the examples that we use in the
4 testimony is SESIS (the special-education student
5 information system), which is managed across the
6 city, about \$356 million in lost funding, because a
7 system that was supposed to be developed to provide
8 adequate information to staff and updates to parents
9 about how their children with IEPs were
10 progressing is cumbersome at best.

11 It takes a great deal of time to input, and
12 created a situation in some schools, where, if you
13 plugged in the toaster, you couldn't get on SESIS.

14 If you unplugged the toaster and plugged in
15 the coffee machine, SESIS would blow up the coffee
16 machine.

17 So there wasn't a lot of infrastructure to
18 support SESIS.

19 Past administration refused to admit it.

20 Current administration asked to work with us
21 to say, What can we do?

22 It's a benefit to us as parents to have that
23 information.

24 In this, it was whimsy.

25 There wasn't any directive in the law that

1 they had -- that the mayor had to pay any attention
2 to us.

3 There was only the whim of one mayor to
4 agree, and another mayor to say, no, I'm not going
5 to pay attention to it.

6 I've got to read this, because this recent
7 report from the Center for American Progress finds:

8 That mayoral-controlled school districts have
9 improved districtwide performance relative to
10 average school-district performance statewide.

11 Mayoral governments is most effective when
12 the mayor is active on the issue of education.

13 Mayors must be ready to engage stakeholders,
14 leverage resources, and facilitate a positive policy
15 environment to overcome barriers to school
16 improvement.

17 A city must adapt mayoral control to their
18 unique local context, variation in local cultures,
19 and politics must be considered.

20 The idea of considering politics is
21 something, I think, New York City and State engages
22 in with great glee.

23 Mayoral control may require reinvention,
24 which I think is where we are right now, and in
25 order to continue to show gains over time, mayors

1 may need to revamp their strategies and practices as
2 necessary.

3 We are encouraging, and hope, that we can
4 spend time in a civil public discourse that includes
5 parents, CEC members, education experts and
6 advocates, principals and teachers, students, and
7 other stakeholders in the discussion.

8 We must be deliberate in our conversations
9 and respectful of opinions.

10 This will take time. Maybe two years, maybe
11 more.

12 I do believe that the constructive and civil
13 public discourse can develop a system of school
14 governance that is reflective of the needs of the
15 students of New York City.

16 One of the subsets of the resolution is an
17 expansion of the Citywide Council on Special
18 Education.

19 This is CCSE special-education wonk stuff.

20 If I get boring, stop me.

21 Prior to this, the CCSE was made up of only
22 parents whose children were being served by a
23 specific district, District 75, which is a construct
24 that only exists here in New York City.

25 It doesn't exist across the state.

1 It doesn't exist in any other state that
2 I know of, and I've asked.

3 I would like to see the current CCSE expanded
4 so that the District 75 parents would have, and the
5 CCSE parents would have, one council to attend
6 instead of having two.

7 I think having -- this is me, I think having
8 two councils can be -- can dilute the power or the
9 impact of either council.

10 If we elect people across the boroughs to
11 represent those special-education programs that are
12 district-based, and those district programs that are
13 District 75-based, we can create the commonality,
14 and we can create a model, hopefully, of
15 cooperation.

16 One of the problems that exists in this
17 current school system is the division of, I don't
18 know, administration, I guess is the best way to
19 describe it, between District 75 principals and
20 general-ed principals; between District 75 staff and
21 general-ed staff.

22 We have schools that are co-located that have
23 different bells, different doors, different PD,
24 different parent-teacher dates.

25 It's just different.

1 And I think, in the long run -- well, I know,
2 in the long run, that research has shown that the
3 integration of students with special needs into
4 classrooms or buildings has created a positive
5 effect for both the child with the general-education
6 need and the child with the IEP.

7 And after all, you can't develop leaders if
8 leaders have never seen or been with people who are
9 not like them, because they are going to be
10 representing individuals who are disabled as those
11 individual students age-up.

12 My son is -- for background, my son is deaf.
13 He's 37, despite my youthful appearance, and he's
14 married, thank God, to a girl from Colombia.

15 [Laughter.]

16 ELLEN McHUGH: They're both fully employed.

17 It is also something that is a result of
18 their public-school education because, in the world
19 of disability, less than 30 percent of the
20 individuals who are disabled are employed, and of
21 that number, only 33 percent are considered to be
22 employed up to their ability.

23 So most of them are underemployed, even
24 though they've gone through college, high school,
25 career- and tech-ed training, whatever.

1 I hope that this has explained some of the
2 reasons for the testimony we've offered.

3 And if you have questions, we would love to
4 engage.

5 I like to talk.

6 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Okay.

7 MONA DAVIDS: That's right, because I believe
8 in order.

9 Good afternoon, Senator Marcellino, and
10 members of the Senate Education Committee.

11 My name is Mona Davids.

12 I am a public-school parent, and I am also
13 the founder and president of the New York City
14 Parents Union. We were founded in 2011.

15 For those that are watching, that may not
16 know of our organization, we are proud to say we are
17 unbought and unbossed, and we're a grassroots
18 organization of parent volunteers who assist other
19 parents in navigating the school system, and
20 ensuring that their children receive equal access to
21 a high-quality education.

22 It's funny, being back in this room,
23 Senator Marcellino.

24 A few years ago, actually, in, I think it was
25 2010 --

1 Was it 2010, Senator Perkins, for the
2 charter-school hearings?

3 Yes.

4 -- in 2010, I attended a hearing.

5 I was then the founder and the president of
6 the New York Charter Parents Association.

7 And many of the charter-school reforms,
8 including the request for that hearing, was made by
9 me to Senator Perkins. And that was a brutal fight,
10 but it was about ensuring that --

11 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Well, Senator Perkins
12 isn't that bad.

13 MONA DAVIDS: No, no, no.

14 It was a brutal --

15 SENATOR PERKINS: I lost the fight.

16 MONA DAVIDS: -- it was -- I don't think we
17 lost the fight.

18 We were successful in getting quite a number
19 of reforms, which the charter lobby has embraced.

20 And one of the things that also helped the
21 district schools -- just for -- just to talk about
22 that for one second -- is that we were able to make
23 sure that district schools received matching funds
24 when charters renovate and they co-located in a
25 public-school building.

1 We were also able to put into the legislation
2 that they serve a fair share.

3 So, you know, it -- it -- I believe it was
4 successful.

5 No system is perfect.

6 The district school system is certainly not
7 perfect, and neither is a very young system like the
8 charter system.

9 In addition to that, the New York City
10 Parents Union has been involved in quite a bit of
11 legislation -- I'm sorry, quite a bit of litigation.

12 Some of the litigation that we are involved
13 with currently is what many call the "teacher
14 tenure" lawsuit. That's called Davids verse
15 New York -- I am Davids -- filed in Richmond County.

16 I am here with two other plaintiffs in the
17 "Davids verse New York" lawsuit, and our members,
18 Sam Pirozzolo and Jacqueline Colson over there.

19 In addition to that lawsuit, other lawsuits
20 that we've been involved with was a few years ago,
21 when New York City, Michael Mulgrew -- Mike and
22 Mike -- couldn't come together on the
23 teacher-evaluation plan, and Cuomo decided to punish
24 our children with the \$250 million penalty.

25 I, Jacqueline, Sam, and other parents, with

1 the support of Mike Rubel (ph.), we successfully
2 filed and got that injunction, stopping Cuomo from
3 punishing our children because the adults couldn't
4 get along.

5 That being said, we've been involved in other
6 lawsuits, where there is inBloom (ph.) co-locations.

7 We -- if you look up, when it comes to
8 school-litigation lawsuits, you'll either see my
9 name or the New York City parent's name, and our
10 parent-members names.

11 So I'm going to talk about our
12 recommendations.

13 We support the concept of mayoral control.

14 Unfortunately, mayoral control under
15 Mayor de Blasio is not working.

16 And we are recommending from you, if you do
17 renew it, you only renew it for one year, and that
18 steps be taken to provide some kind of checks and
19 balances.

20 You've heard what the other parent-advocates
21 have said.

22 The way it's structured now, it's a
23 dictatorship, and a dictatorship leads to abuse, and
24 that is what's going on in our school system.

25 And I will elaborate further when I speak

1 about the problems.

2 We strongly believe in accountability when it
3 comes to our school system.

4 Unfortunately, mayoral control, at this
5 juncture, is not about accountability. It's
6 about whatever Mayor de Blasio, Chancellor Fariña,
7 and the United Federation of Teachers, which I call
8 "de Blasio, Inc.," wants.

9 With the political support of the
10 United Federation of Teachers, Chancellor Fariña,
11 and Michael Mulgrew, in our opinion, have reversed
12 some positive gains, especially contractual gains,
13 that we had under Mayor Bloomberg.

14 Now, people in this room will know I am not a
15 Mayor Bloomberg fan, nor was I a Klein or Walcott
16 fan. But one thing we knew was that, despite all of
17 our disagreements, Bloomberg II was unbought and
18 unbossed.

19 And Bloomberg, no matter what, was going to
20 do what was in the best interests of our children.

21 How we got there was another story.

22 That being said, you have my testimony.

23 That's not what's happening now.

24 This is what we recommend to deal with
25 "de Blasio, Inc." to, hopefully, continue to have a

1 strong mayoral-control system that respects parents,
2 that ensures that every child receives equal access
3 to a high-quality education, and also complies with
4 the law.

5 The six things I'm going to speak about, very
6 briefly, is:

7 Number one: The credit-recovery scheme and
8 the free diplomas.

9 You showed up.

10 You showed up.

11 Everybody showed up.

12 If this was a New York City high school, we'd
13 all get free diplomas because of the credit-recovery
14 scheme. Everybody gets a diploma.

15 The "New York Post" has highlighted so many
16 stories, reported by teachers -- not by parents;
17 not, at first, by students -- by teachers, who are
18 reporting that: We are feeling pressure. We are
19 forced to do a cover-up. Even though these kids
20 don't attend school, do no schoolwork, do no
21 homework, do not sit for exams, we have to pass
22 them.

23 That is a problem, because that is all part
24 of "de Blasio, Inc.'s" agenda in being the
25 "progressive messiah," as we call him, and to ensure

1 that the public thinks he's doing a great job in our
2 schools, which, as you'll hear from other
3 parent-advocates, that's not the case.

4 The second thing, what we call the "union
5 job-protection scheme," also known as "renewal
6 schools."

7 The renewal schools are a failure.

8 In the renewal schools we have credit
9 recovery. We continue to have students who are
10 pushed out, graduating, going to city university of
11 New York or any other college, and forced to take
12 remedial classes.

13 I don't exactly have the numbers, but
14 probably somebody like Leonie or someone here would
15 know exactly how much our per-pupil funding is for
16 New York City public students, general-education
17 students.

18 What is it, about \$16,000 a year?

19 Why is it that our children are in the school
20 system, the school district, the state, where the
21 most, the highest amount, is spent on education, and
22 our children are forced to go into debt so that they
23 can take these remedial courses after getting their
24 free diplomas?

25 The next thing is school safety.

1 There has been a surge, an explosion, of
2 weapons; weapons, including loaded guns, in our
3 schools, machetes in our schools, and other weapons.

4 And instead of addressing that problem,
5 "de Blasio, Inc." -- UFT, Fariña, and
6 Mayor de Blasio, because they're all one in the same
7 -- "de Blasio, Inc." covers it up.

8 Not only do they put the safety of our
9 children in jeopardy, they have the audacity to lie
10 to parents and say, Oh, no, our schools are safe.

11 Well, the last time I checked, there are no
12 guns being found in city hall; there are no guns
13 being found at One Police Plaza, except for the guns
14 the police officers are required to wear; and there
15 certainly are no guns found at the Department of
16 Education.

17 But all three of those places -- One Police
18 Plaza, city hall, and Tweed -- all have metal
19 detectors.

20 So, if you have metal detectors to protect
21 yourself, and there aren't guns and loaded weapons
22 and machetes being found every day, why can't we
23 have that for our children in the public school
24 system?

25 Because Mayor de Blasio, "de Blasio, Inc.,"

1 doesn't want the public to know about the surge in
2 weapons.

3 The other issue is, Mayor de Blasio has also
4 decided, unilaterally, without engaging parents, to
5 change the school suspension policy and the
6 discipline policy.

7 So, pretty much, what that means, we call
8 that the "Kumbaya approach."

9 Oh, okay, you picked up a chair and you hit a
10 student with the chair?

11 That's okay. Just don't do it next time.

12 Oh, you punched a student?

13 Oh, you spat on a teacher?

14 Oh, that's okay. Don't do it next time.

15 We'll send you home with a note to your mom,
16 just letting them know what you did, but don't do it
17 next time.

18 And because of this ridiculous suspension
19 policy that's in place, it's resulted in a lot of
20 assaults of students and an increased amount of
21 bullying in the schools.

22 And when parents go to the DOE, when they
23 call 311, when they call the superintendents, when
24 they speak to the principal, they're given the
25 runaround, because the principals can no longer

1 suspend students under the "Kumbaya policy." They
2 have to get permission of the superintendents.

3 The superintendents cannot suspend the
4 students either because she has to get permission of
5 Fariña.

6 Fariña and "de Blasio, Inc." are not
7 suspending students because they want to continue to
8 mislead the public that the schools are safe, so
9 that they can cover up that -- this -- these new
10 policies of theirs that they put forth, without
11 parents' consultation or engagement, is working.

12 Parents' intimidation and retaliation, this
13 is what happens when you have a dictatorship; when
14 you have an abusive dictatorship.

15 I think, probably, Leonie is -- may talk
16 about this as well, and other people have spoken
17 about the PEP (the Panel for Educational Policy.)

18 We call it the "rubber stamp."

19 We called it the "rubber stamp" when
20 Bloomberg was there, and we're calling it an even
21 bigger rubber stamp now.

22 One of the members, The Bronx PEP member
23 brought up the fact that the DOE is not complying
24 with state education law in disclosing all of the
25 information about the contracts; posting the

1 contracts online, as they're required to do, so that
2 the public can see and folks can do their
3 investigation.

4 And then when PEP members, such as
5 Mr. Powell, started asking, "Well, okay, I see
6 something on the agenda about ABC contract. Nobody
7 sent me ABC contract. I'm on the contract
8 committee. What's going on?" Guess what?

9 Instead of answering the man's questions, who
10 is there, supposed to represent the parents and
11 community and the public, and to ensure that there's
12 no financial mismanagement or chicanery or bad
13 deals, parents like him, and many other parents
14 throughout the school system on every level, are
15 isolated.

16 They're then intimidated by DOE, by their
17 principals, by their superintendents.

18 And it's gotten to the point where it's a
19 regular occurrence, where if you speak out or if you
20 ask any question, all of a sudden, you'll have a
21 knock on your door that night or the next night and
22 it will be ACS, because that's what they're doing to
23 intimidate the parents.

24 And you need to think about that, because
25 this really impacts parents.

1 It -- it's unconscionable to do that to any
2 parent who is simply seeking accountability, or
3 asking questions about the education their children
4 are receiving, or other problems in the school.

5 The other intimidation tactic that they use,
6 "de Blasio, Inc." -- de Blasio, UFT, and Fariña --
7 is that they are now calling the police on parents.

8 So if a parent, who they think is a problem
9 parent because the parent asked questions; or in the
10 case of the Brooklyn father, the parent wanted to
11 know why that teacher kept on letting his son soil
12 himself and sit for the whole day in his own
13 excrement, for that parent to ask that teacher a
14 question, they were rewarded with being arrested in
15 front of their child, in front of the school,
16 because that's what they do.

17 Not just him, he's not the only one. We have
18 other parents.

19 It's one of their number-one tactics.

20 So once that arrest has happened at the
21 school, the parents can no longer enter the school
22 building. The parent cannot be involved in their
23 child's education.

24 It's not one case, it's not two cases, it's
25 not three, it's not four.

1 This is a serious problem.

2 And then when you dig deeper, these parents,
3 all of them, have questioned either the governance
4 of the school system or the running of the school or
5 brought up situations and demanded answers about why
6 the kids in their schools are failing.

7 So we have a problem here, and parents have
8 no recourse, we have nobody to turn to, because,
9 once a year, or every few years, when mayoral
10 control may be renewed, you have this hearing, but
11 what happens in the meantime?

12 When a parent is arrested at the school,
13 who's going to take the child home? Who's going to
14 take care of the child?

15 But this is what's happening in our schools.

16 And this is a real problem.

17 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Before you go on, the
18 number about State aid per pupil, the best we could
19 come up with is, the State puts in about \$9100 per
20 pupil.

21 The City of New York has its own number and a
22 contribution to that. They add to that.

23 But it varies, from district to district, and
24 school to school.

25 So we do not have a solid number that we can

1 give you at this point in time, relative to the City
2 contribution, and what the total amount combined is
3 (indiscernible).

4 It's going to be different from place to
5 place.

6 We probably could work that out over time,
7 but we don't have a lot of time right now.

8 MONA DAVIDS: Thank you, sir.

9 The other problem with mayoral control, we
10 have Mayor de Blasio.

11 Before we had Public Advocate de Blasio.

12 Public Advocate de Blasio believed in
13 transparency.

14 Public Advocate de Blasio demanded of the
15 Bloomberg Administration that they answer FOILs in a
16 timely fashion.

17 Public Advocate de Blasio made so many
18 pronouncements about how he was going to be
19 transparent.

20 But there's no transparency within the
21 Department of Education.

22 Right now, I know I do, I know probably quite
23 a number of reporters here, and probably a number of
24 parent-advocates on both sides, are waiting on
25 FOILs.

1 Our freedom-of-information requests are
2 hardly ever answered.

3 I'm waiting on FOILs that are over a year
4 old.

5 I'm sure other people are waiting on FOILs
6 that are just, you know, as old.

7 And what happens is, we continue getting
8 these, oh, you know, timely letters saying that, we
9 need more time, we need more time, we need more
10 time, because they know we parents and we
11 parent-advocates don't have the resources now to go
12 and get an attorney to file a lawsuit to compel them
13 to comply with the Freedom of Information Law.

14 It's another abuse under mayoral control.

15 The compliance, when it comes to
16 open-meetings law, I'm sure Leonie Haimson, from
17 Class Size Matters, is going to speak about it, and
18 I have it, briefly, talking about it in my
19 testimony.

20 But to summarize:

21 Mayor de Blasio and "de Blasio, Inc." have
22 decided that they're going to close
23 school-leadership team meetings; that they're now
24 private, because they don't want the community and
25 the public.

1 And this is an administration that says:
2 We're open. Everybody's welcome. We want everyone
3 to be involved.

4 But they've closed school-leadership team
5 meetings, forcing parents, parent-advocates,
6 advocacy groups, and the public advocate to file a
7 lawsuit, to force -- to try to force them to
8 actually follow your law.

9 Even though the judge agreed with
10 Class Size Matters and Public Advocate James,
11 "de Blasio, Inc." -- Fariña, de Blasio, and UFT --
12 are still not opening the meetings and complying
13 with the law, until they complete their appeal.

14 Since they were so successful at closing SLT
15 meetings, they've now decided that they're going to
16 close parent-association and
17 parent-teacher-association meetings.

18 So, now, they're doing the same thing.

19 Oh, well, you know, we don't care. It's a
20 PA meeting. It's not open to the public.

21 Well, yes, it is open to the public.

22 We've had, Robert Freeman, who you know from
23 the Committee of Open -- Committee on Open
24 Governments, he's done an opinion on it.

25 It's in the law.

1 You know.

2 But, "de Blasio, Inc." doesn't have to comply
3 with it because, what can we do, what can reporters
4 do, and what can you do?

5 Our recommendations, to close -- oh, sorry.

6 Number seven, before I close:

7 As I mentioned earlier, when it comes to
8 charter schools, I firmly believe in holding them
9 accountable.

10 When it comes to our children, I firmly
11 believe that we must do, always, what is in the best
12 interests of the children.

13 And I believe in school choice, because
14 I don't see why anyone must be forced to send their
15 child to a burning building.

16 But I do agree, sometimes you don't know
17 that, you know, the other building has structural
18 problems too.

19 That being said, Mayor de Blasio and
20 "de Blasio, Inc." are carrying out a vendetta.

21 With the parents union, we go up against the
22 education-reform lobby, we go up against what we
23 call the "status quo," the unions, because, no
24 matter what, if you look at our history and what
25 we've done, we're about what's in the best interests

1 of all children.

2 The Charter Schools Act governs charter
3 schools.

4 I'm a firm believer in following the law.

5 Charter schools are autonomous. Charter
6 schools are their own districts. They're their own
7 LEA.

8 "De Blasio, Inc.," because of mayoral control
9 that you have given him, is carrying out a personal
10 vendetta against Eva Moskowitz.

11 And everybody in this room that knows me know
12 I don't always agree with Eva.

13 As a matter of fact, I think I've been on
14 just about every co-location lawsuit, fighting Eva,
15 before the law was changed.

16 The charter-rent lawsuit, I was on it,
17 parents union was on it, and other parents in this
18 room.

19 But it's always about what's in the best
20 interests of the children.

21 Withholding the \$750,000 -- illegally
22 withholding the \$750,000 -- for those students,
23 those Black and Latino students in success academy,
24 is not fair.

25 It's an attack on those families, it's an

1 attack on those children, and it's just to get even
2 with a personal vendetta.

3 There is no justification for withholding
4 that pre-K money.

5 That money came from you; it came from the
6 Governor; it came from the state budget.

7 Charters are their own LEA.

8 Just because the City disperses the funds to
9 CBOs and to their district schools under their
10 authority, doesn't mean mayoral control gives
11 Mayor de Blasio and "de Blasio, Inc." the right to
12 do a vendetta against one woman, but punishing
13 thousands of students.

14 And I'm going to read this.

15 In closing:

16 Allow me to note that all of us have been
17 learning about the true meaning of mayoral control
18 as we watch a second mayor utilize it.

19 Our challenge, is to fashion an
20 education-governance system that can work well
21 with -- and for any mayor and all parents and
22 students.

23 We have yet to achieve this.

24 In my testimony, I have solid recommendations
25 on an independent oversight board that consists of

1 parents and community stakeholders.

2 I have, step-by-step, what we're seeking.

3 Metrics to be made; milestones.

4 Quarterly meetings with this legislative
5 board, with the DOE, so that when situations, like
6 what I've just shared with you that is going on with
7 parents in the school system, you can bring that up
8 at those quarterly meetings with whoever the mayor
9 is and whoever his chancellor is.

10 Mayoral control is supposed to be there to
11 serve the needs of the children, to educate the
12 children, to make sure that someone is held
13 accountable.

14 Right now, mayoral control is not working.

15 So, we may support the concept, but we
16 certainly do not support "de Blasio, Inc."

17 Thank you.

18 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Okay. Thank you very
19 much.

20 [Applause.]

21 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

22 If I could, if you might stay for a moment,
23 just to --

24 MONA DAVIDS: Sorry.

25 SENATOR MARCELLINO: -- if my colleagues may

1 have...

2 We heard directly from Chancellor Fariña that
3 suspensions would occur if someone had a weapon or
4 brought a weapon, because I brought up the "Post"
5 article that recently -- or, either yesterday or the
6 day before, talked about the increase in the number
7 of weapons picked up in schools, and the police
8 commissioner actually telling the parents to
9 pat-down their kids before they leave the house,
10 which is something I've never heard in my life, and
11 I taught for 20 years -- 20-plus years in the city
12 of New York in those schools.

13 So it was interesting, though, she did say
14 that there would be suspensions.

15 You're saying there are no suspensions?

16 MONA DAVIDS: There are no suspensions for
17 bringing the weapons into the school.

18 I would be glad to send you some information
19 about some of these cases that were highlighted in
20 the "Post," where, if your staff,
21 Senator Marcellino, wants to follow up and hear for
22 yourself, from those sources --

23 SENATOR MARCELLINO: I would appreciate that.

24 MONA DAVIDS: -- confirmed sources, they're
25 not suspending the kids.

1 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Okay. Please do, send
2 us specific examples, and we'll try to follow up on
3 that.

4 With respect to the open-meetings law, the
5 only way you can be excluded to a meeting is if
6 they're talking about personnel issues or
7 negotiations in a contract.

8 Those are the only two ways people can be
9 excluded from a public meeting from a public entity.

10 So, saying that you cannot attend -- a member
11 of the general public cannot attend a school-board
12 meeting or PTA meeting, is simply not the case,
13 unless --

14 MONA DAVIDS: That --

15 SENATOR MARCELLINO: -- personnel matters are
16 being discussed, or unless we are talking about
17 private contract -- you know, negotiations, or union
18 contract, or something to that extent.

19 So if you're saying that's occurring, if we
20 can get something on that in writing, we'd
21 appreciate that.

22 MONA DAVIDS: I will send that to you in
23 writing.

24 I can -- not just that, I can speak
25 personally.

1 I was on an SLT.

2 My SLT, after Carmen Fariña put out this
3 edict, started keeping people, the public, out.

4 Speaking, when it comes to parent
5 associations, because of the fact that I am the lead
6 plaintiff in Davids verse New York, you can imagine
7 the pushback and the attacks that I have personally
8 experienced, as well as our other plaintiffs.

9 That being said, even with my school, and one
10 of the examples for Bob Freeman was my school, they
11 refused to let in a reporter. They refused to let
12 in a representative from StudentsFirst.

13 And then parents like myself, who are parents
14 in the school, they called the police and had us
15 removed.

16 And before they did that, they checked with
17 Tweed.

18 So -- and I'm just one example, and I know of
19 this happening to other parents.

20 And it's not like Chancellor Fariña doesn't
21 know. She knows everything, because we document
22 everything.

23 And that is why we even had the reporter
24 there and we had other witnesses there.

25 So this is -- this is a problem.

1 And they can get away with it because no one
2 is holding them accountable.

3 "De Blasio, Inc." is not here, Senators.

4 UFT, the Mayor, they're not here. They've
5 made their deal.

6 But it's our children in the school system.

7 And I appreciate so much, you allowing us to
8 be here and talk about how mayoral control has
9 impacted our children.

10 I hope that, going forward, you have more
11 communication and outreach with the parents.

12 I've looked at your speaker list.

13 And, just looking at your speaker list,
14 I think there are, maybe, two speakers on that list
15 with children currently in the school system.

16 Two. And I'm one of them.

17 So there's a problem here, and I'm pretty
18 sure the other parent is going to say something
19 similar to what I've said.

20 And at your Albany hearing, again, you had
21 one parent who had a child in the school system.

22 So if we parents, who are the real
23 stakeholders, who manage to get invited to this,
24 parents with children who are still in the school
25 system, parents of children who reflect the

1 demographics of children condemned to failing, if we
2 are saying this system is not working, and if you
3 are seeing how you yourself have been treated today
4 with "de Blasio, Inc." missing, there is a problem
5 here.

6 So, again, we support mayoral control.

7 I urge you to please look at our
8 recommendations about the independence monitor, and
9 to really engage the parents; truly engage the
10 parents.

11 And to give us some contact of someone that
12 we can reach out to when we are ignored by this
13 Mayor and by this Chancellor.

14 There needs to be some types of checks and
15 balances, and there simply are none.

16 SENATOR MARCELLINO: We thank you very much.

17 MONA DAVIDS: Thank you, sir.

18 [Applause.]

19 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Just as a matter of
20 clarifying things, and making sure everybody is
21 fully aware:

22 When I taught, I was a UFT delegate, and a
23 chapter chairperson for my high school.

24 And as I said to you before, the UFT was
25 invited.

1 They declined to attend both hearings.

2 That's their call.

3 And when I was an assistant principal, board
4 administration, I was a member of the CSA.

5 So -- so everyone knows where we are coming
6 from.

7 SENATOR ADDABBO: Can I say something?

8 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Sure.

9 SENATOR ADDABBO: Also, Mr. Chair, I do want
10 to encourage all parents and those interested in
11 this issue, it doesn't take a hearing, it doesn't
12 take a press conference, or a trip up to Albany.

13 E-mails, phone calls, visiting your electeds,
14 parents need to be heard. Parents have a vested
15 interest in their children's education.

16 And from now, until the time that we decide
17 on mayoral control, or not, I do encourage all
18 parents to reach out to their elected officials.

19 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Absolutely.

20 The next panel will consist of Tenicka Boyd,
21 Martha Zornow, Khari Shabazz, and Jacob Mnookin.

22 If they could come, please.

23 And as I said to you -- the prior people, if
24 you could summarize, it would be helpful, since we
25 have copies of your written testimony, and that will

1 be put into the record, in its entirety.

2 So, you have no fear of that.

3 Whoever is going speak first.

4 TENICKA BOYD: Good evening -- or, good
5 afternoon.

6 I'm Tenicka Boyd. I'm the senior director of
7 organizing at StudentsFirstNY.

8 I guess I'm the second New York State
9 public-school parent. My daughter attends PS 321 in
10 Brooklyn.

11 I work at StudentsFirstNY. We're an advocacy
12 organization. We organize traditional district
13 public-school parents in 16 communities across
14 New York City; so that's communities in Jamaica,
15 Queens; Harlem; east New York; Brownsville; and
16 communities like that.

17 I really want to center this idea in the
18 magnitude of what we're talking about here.

19 We're talking about 1.1 million students that
20 Mayor de Blasio is in charge of, and, also, many of
21 those students are students of color. Many of those
22 students, also, are legally zoned to historically
23 and persistently failing school.

24 So the magnitude of that is really, really
25 great.

1 One out of 340 Americans is a New York City
2 public-school student.

3 So when we talk about mayoral control, we
4 really need to center the lives marginalized in
5 low-income students, especially students of color.

6 There's about seven things that I think that
7 we really need to look under the hood when we talk
8 about mayoral control under Mayor de Blasio, and
9 I'll be, I think, much quicker than Mona.

10 So, a few things.

11 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Bless you.

12 TENICKA BOYD: Thank you.

13 So, the Mayor has talked a lot about making
14 sure that all second-graders can read by 2026.

15 The Mayor will be long gone after that, and
16 so I really think we need to think about the
17 deadlines that the Mayor has set for himself and the
18 students of New York City as we think about mayoral
19 control.

20 Another thing, we're still dealing with a
21 tremendous amount of dropout factories.

22 We have students from Boys and Girls High
23 School, Automotive High School, Clinton High School
24 in the Bronx, where 46 percent of children are
25 graduating in four years.

1 Of the 46 percent of those students, only
2 13 percent of those students are graduating with a
3 high school diploma that means anything.

4 So we're still giving students these
5 meritless diplomas and these empty credentials.

6 Another thing, 8 out of 10 New York City
7 public-school students who are graduating are also
8 taking remedial courses; again, so they're not
9 college-ready.

10 They don't have the skills to be successful
11 and really raise themselves out of intergenerational
12 poverty, which is something that is essential for
13 any public school system.

14 Also, one of the first things that
15 Mayor de Blasio did as an act of mayoral control, is
16 he cut the school day by 2 1/2 hours a week.

17 Right?

18 And so when we think about things that we
19 know are good for students, it's -- really, it's
20 more instructional time and longer school days.

21 And this mayor has been consistent in cutting
22 the instructional time of students, and students in
23 low-income communities and communities of color, our
24 most marginalized students who need it the most.

25 Also, this mayor is ignoring solutions.

1 We know that school choice and expanding
2 school choice is something that is very important.

3 It has allowed students who, again, are zoned
4 to legally and persistently failing schools,
5 opportunities to have a different pathway for
6 success and career-readiness.

7 And this mayor has not done that.

8 Also, accountability is really non-existent.

9 So the Mayor has a school-renewal plan, and
10 the school-renewal schools where 93 percent of the
11 students are still failing. Many of those students
12 are, again, low-income students and students of
13 color.

14 So you're talking about plans like washers
15 and driers and glasses, all of which sounds very
16 nice and, I'm sure, socially conscious.

17 But what's really important for those
18 students is to be able to have the skills -- the
19 reading and math skills, and the Mayor has yet to
20 put forth a plan to address that 2 1/2 years in.

21 So, what I'll say, in closing, is I really
22 want to center the lives of a few parents that
23 I work with each and every day.

24 One of those parents is Nikea (ph.) Porter.
25 She's the mother of a second-grader from PS 305 in

1 Bed-Stuy, which is a part of the Mayor's
2 school-renewal plan.

3 Her son is a year away from taking the state
4 and math test, but she doesn't feel like he's
5 properly prepared.

6 That school only has 3 percent --
7 3 percent -- of the students who are reading at
8 grade level.

9 She is deeply concerned.

10 She's been an advocate as long as I can
11 remember.

12 She's sent e-mails, she's appeared on NY1,
13 really encouraging the Mayor to raise the standards
14 for students in this renewal-school plan.

15 Camille Artimas (ph.) is a mother who stood
16 outside of this very building this morning and
17 talked about her daughter, who, in the past
18 2 1/2 years, she's transferred to three different
19 schools, from everywhere from Bed-Stuy, to Bushwick,
20 to find a quality school for her child.

21 She's wait-listed for high-performing charter
22 schools, but there are not enough seats, and so she
23 is stuck with persistently and failing schools.

24 And she is really afraid of the number of
25 vacancies in her daughter's school, and the Mayor is

1 replacing some of these teachers who are leaving the
2 school system with "ATR" teachers; teachers from the
3 absent teacher reserve.

4 That's a system where we're spending
5 \$100 million a year on teachers who are not teaching
6 in the classroom. These are excess teachers, many
7 of whom are from failing schools.

8 And those teachers are not in Park Slope
9 where I send my daughter to school.

10 They're going to places where marginalized
11 parents are left to live in far -- you know,
12 Far Rockaway, east New York, and Brownsville, and
13 communities like that.

14 And the Mayor needs to be held accountable
15 for the lack of quality teachers that he's placing
16 with our most marginalized and vulnerable students.

17 Nikea and Camille's stories -- you know,
18 they're sad, and they're stories that I hear every
19 day; but, unfortunately, they're not unique.

20 They're stories of many New York City
21 public-school parents, and they're stories that
22 I really think that we should center as we think
23 about how we extend mayoral control to this
24 particular mayor, and, also, as we think about
25 accountability.

1 Thank you.

2 MARTHA ZORNOW: Good afternoon, Senators.

3 My name is Martha Zornow. I'm the founding
4 principal of Girls Prep Bronx Middle School, a
5 public charter school located in District 8 in
6 The Bronx.

7 We are one of the options that parents have
8 to choose a high-quality education in their
9 neighborhood.

10 We're part of the public prep network, a
11 non-profit network of schools serving 1500 students.

12 We had a bunch of our parents here today.

13 We have a few hearty ones left.

14 And one of our hallmarks is that our parents
15 come out to support, because having the choice of a
16 high-quality public school for their children is
17 very important in their lives.

18 I've been an administrator for over
19 seven years, and an educator for fifteen.

20 I started in The Bronx as a New York City
21 teaching fellow, but after a few years in a
22 struggling school, I left for public schools in
23 Westchester to learn how to be a teacher.

24 Most recently, I served as the tenured
25 principal of Seven Bridges Middle School in

1 Chappaqua for four years, but I left to run
2 Girls Prep Bronx Middle School in 2014.

3 I felt deeply that the discrepancy between
4 what was available in Chappaqua and what was
5 available in District 8 was absolutely unfair, and
6 it was incumbent on me to come down and do what I
7 could.

8 At public prep, our philosophy is to start
9 early with the end in mind: To put all of our
10 students on a path to college completion. No
11 remedial courses, go to high school, ready to go.

12 Our curriculum is as rich and strong as
13 anything available in Westchester.

14 We want to ensure that our students attain
15 high levels of achievement across academic
16 disciplines, but also in the arts, music, theater,
17 dance, that they do original science, while also
18 helping our skills -- helping our students to
19 develop the character skills and core values that
20 they need to overcome the inevitable hurdles on the
21 way to college.

22 We serve students across New York City, but
23 we're deeply proud to be part of a vibrant community
24 in the South Bronx.

25 We just finished our random lottery for the

1 2016-17 school year; and, yes, we do, even in middle
2 school, admit new students.

3 There were 176 applications for 25 open
4 seats.

5 As proud as I am that so many families want
6 to come, I'm horribly disappointed that we cannot
7 meet the demand of the community to serve more
8 children, desperate for a quality public education,
9 in their neighborhood.

10 We believe that your ZIP code should never
11 determine the quality of your education.

12 This means that we need to disrupt the
13 systems that perpetuate education equality in our
14 city.

15 The de Blasio Administration claims to have
16 similar goals, but, we have to question the unequal
17 treatment by us by Mayor de Blasio.

18 If the Mayor had had his way, Girls Prep
19 Bronx Middle School would never have opened.

20 From the outset, he challenged our ability to
21 co-locate with another public school -- actually
22 two.

23 We fought this with our vibrant parent
24 community, and we have gone on to build a collegial
25 relationship with both the Zone Middle School and

1 the District 75 School with whom we share our
2 building.

3 Mayor de Blasio's unequal treatment did not
4 stop at co-location.

5 Funding for traditional public schools has
6 gone up six times faster than funding for public
7 charter schools, and Mayor de Blasio does not
8 support fair funding for us.

9 We -- while Chancellor Fariña speaks about
10 the importance of the arts, space is not available.

11 You cannot run a band or a visual-art program
12 on a cart in a classroom; and, yet, there is no
13 space to do that.

14 We -- initially, our network was not given
15 the opportunity to serve 4-year olds in UPK, and we
16 really had to fight for that.

17 We were initially excluded from offering
18 after-school programs for students in Grade 6, and
19 we had to fight to participate in that so that our
20 students can have the rich range of enrichment
21 opportunities after school in a safe place, until
22 6:00, that they deserve.

23 This fits a troubling pattern that public
24 charter-school leaders have encountered, in which
25 the Mayor claims to care deeply about providing

1 programs and opportunities for all children, but
2 then goes on to exclude our children from the same
3 neighborhoods.

4 This is a political choice by the Mayor.

5 He's influenced by status quo interests
6 instead of New York parents and families.

7 Today's hearing is about accountability.

8 As a public-school charter leader, this is
9 something we are very familiar with.

10 We have to justify our continued operation to
11 our authorizers in a renewal process every three or
12 five years, and we have annual accountability; and
13 we think the Mayor should face the same.

14 This rigorous system accountability keeps us
15 sharp, and we know that if we deviate from our
16 mission, we lose the privilege of serving children.

17 We believe that mayoral control is the
18 correct policy, but, the Mayor really needs to face
19 the same kind of rigorous accountability that our
20 school face, with clear, annual, or more frequent,
21 milestones and metrics.

22 When a mayor, any mayor, favors one type of
23 public-school student over another and faces no
24 consequences, this problem must be addressed through
25 hearings like this one.

1 And you as state leaders can hold the Mayor
2 accountable just as the State holds us accountable.

3 I hope this Committee will use today's
4 hearing to force the Mayor to be more accountable to
5 the families of the South Bronx desperate for a
6 great public school, and have a more-inclusive
7 approach to meeting those families' needs.

8 To do this, the Mayor must be a leader who
9 puts the needs of all public children first,
10 including those who attend public charter schools.

11 Thank you so much for having me here today.

12 KHARI SHABAZZ: Good afternoon.

13 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Good afternoon.

14 KHARI SHABAZZ: My name is Khari Shabazz.
15 I'm currently the principal of Success Academy,
16 Harlem West, located on 114th Street, between
17 7th and 8th.

18 I also come to you as a parent, a single
19 father, in Harlem, where I raised my son, who is now
20 22, and a graduate of the University of Albany.

21 I went to his graduation this weekend.

22 And I did not keep him in New York City
23 public schools because of some of the brutality and
24 the dangers that you've heard today. But, we do
25 live in Harlem.

1 And like all public schools, we have our kids
2 come to us through a random lottery. There's high
3 demand for spaces in our school. About -- at the
4 high level, about 10 applications for every one
5 seat.

6 And, we're here today to talk about how
7 mayoral control sort of affects my school in very
8 large ways.

9 We do agree that mayoral control allows for
10 efficiency, it allows for accountability, and we do
11 believe that it provides for stability; however, it
12 can be abused in many ways, as you heard today.

13 And, specifically, as related to success,
14 Mayor de Blasio prevented some schools from
15 co-locating. He rolled back promises, and as a
16 result, our children were homeless, and, in search
17 of a school.

18 And as you can know, that is definitely
19 emotionally harmful to children and families.

20 As a principal, I need the resources to run
21 my school; however, I get less than the
22 public-school counterparts, the traditional
23 public-school principals, in my school, and we think
24 that's unfair.

25 We need to have a mayor who understands that

1 all school principals, all schools, need to have
2 equitable funding, and the per-pupil expenditure
3 should be the same.

4 When speaking about that, Mayor de Blasio in
5 particular said that, "We do not support initiatives
6 that take away from one group and give to another."

7 And that is very divisive and misleading,
8 because that's not how it works.

9 And instead of taking that opportunity to be
10 for all children, he decided that he was going to be
11 part of the machine that you've heard about today,
12 in terms of being connected to the UFT, and not his
13 own man.

14 Our school day starts at 7:15 in the morning;
15 we end school at 5:15.

16 We have incredible curriculum, where our
17 children are getting a world-class education. And
18 to not get the same per-pupil funding is rather
19 disrespectful to our children and families.

20 Mayoral control even impacts us in ways
21 profoundly, as you heard earlier today, in terms of
22 our discipline, and in terms of school safety.

23 At success academies, we do have a policy
24 where we suspend children; however, I'm in a
25 building where there are kids who are dangerous to

1 the building itself, and they're there day after
2 day.

3 In terms of making sure that we are safe, we
4 are located on the fifth floor of a building that
5 has four -- has five floors, and we have to expend
6 adult energy to make sure that our children are able
7 to travel through the school, and through a
8 neighborhood, quite frankly, that's particularly
9 violent.

10 One of the things that I love about working
11 for success, giving those issues that we have, is
12 that our children are getting a world-class
13 education. They're deconstructing myths and they're
14 smashing stereotypes.

15 They perform in the top 1 percent in math, in
16 the top 3 percent in ELA across, and that's in the
17 state, and, they are doing fantastic things in our
18 classrooms.

19 We want to make sure that we remove the
20 politics, so we, too, also call for the Mayor to
21 have some accountability for what he is doing with
22 control of New York City schools.

23 I want to thank you for taking this
24 opportunity to hear about success academies and
25 about the role that we have, and I appreciate the

1 opportunity to talk to you today.

2 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

3 [Applause.]

4 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Next panel will be --

5 JACOB MNOOKIN: Excuse me, I'm sorry.

6 SENATOR MARCELLINO: I'm sorry.

7 One more.

8 JACOB MNOOKIN: I'll be quick.

9 Good afternoon.

10 Thank you very much for having me.

11 My name is Jacob Mnookin. I'm the founder
12 and executive director of Coney Island Preparatory
13 Public Charter School. We serve almost 800 students
14 across our elementary, middle, and high schools.

15 When I founded Coney Island Prep, in just
16 four rooms at a local New York city Housing
17 Authority community center, we were the only charter
18 school in south Brooklyn.

19 Before we even had our own building, we
20 received hundreds of applications.

21 The stories we heard from parents painted a
22 clear picture of a community where many families did
23 not feel that their traditional public school could
24 keep their children safe and allow them to learn.

25 As a leader -- as a school leader in

1 New York City under multiple administrations, I've
2 seen the success of mayoral control.

3 Strong mayoral leadership is best for
4 New York City's children, far better than the
5 previous system of school-board leadership; however,
6 educators like myself, as you have heard today, have
7 concerns about the actions of the current
8 administration.

9 That's why today's hearing is so important.

10 It is through hearings like these that the
11 Mayor is held accountable for his management of the
12 city schools, where his leadership team must prove
13 themselves worthy of the privilege of extended
14 control of our schools.

15 It is unfortunate that the Mayor did not
16 attend the hearing today to hear these concerns.

17 The current administration has consistently
18 proven that it does not wish to treat all
19 public-school students equally.

20 Public charter schools have been forced to
21 fight tooth and nail for resources, while, at the
22 same time, they have been mischaracterized and
23 attacked by the Mayor and the city's Department of
24 Education.

25 Coney Island Prep was forced into a combative

1 relationship with the Mayor and his allies for space
2 for our students after his election.

3 Since then, we've continued to struggle with
4 the Mayor's Administration, which seems to believe
5 that co-located charters owe extra rent money than
6 traditional schools do not.

7 Because of the Mayor's attitude and divisive
8 approach, the cooperative relationship the DOE used
9 to have with charters has become a combative one.

10 Together with parents, we have spoken out
11 against the unfair treatment of our kids.

12 Despite public outcry, the Mayor and his
13 administration have worked tirelessly to build
14 roadblocks, slowing the growth of public charter
15 schools.

16 More than eight times as many students
17 applied for our kindergarten program than we have
18 seats; almost four times as many for fifth grade.

19 New York families are desperate for the
20 opportunity to choose charters.

21 By reinforcing inequality in school
22 resources, the Mayor has not only limited
23 opportunities for students, but he has also
24 eliminated the -- limited the opportunity for
25 partnership between the administration and public

1 charter-school leaders.

2 This division helps no one, and hurts
3 students most of all.

4 Playing politics in this way has real
5 consequences for students and families.

6 As an educator, students are my greatest
7 concern.

8 All public-school students deserve to be
9 treated equally no matter what politics are at play.

10 The Mayor must address these inequalities
11 present in the public school system of
12 New York City.

13 These hearings provide that opportunity.

14 I do not wish to see control of the school
15 system returned to a school board, but this
16 administration, and future administrations, must
17 prove themselves worthy of mayoral control by
18 representing all children in our city.

19 Thank you.

20 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

21 [Applause.]

22 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Next panel,
23 Kathryn Wylde -- hope I'm pronouncing the names
24 correctly -- Marcus Winters, Laura Altschuler, and
25 Leonie Haimson.

1 Come up and share the microphones. There's
2 only two mics, but, as they speak, but you're more
3 than welcome to move a chair, sit it next to the
4 table.

5 Please.

6 KATHRYN WYLDE: Thank you,
7 Senators Marcellino and Addabbo.

8 I appreciate you taking the time to make this
9 much focus on New York City schools.

10 I'm Kathryn Wylde, president and CEO of the
11 Partnership for New York City. We represent the
12 city's business leadership.

13 Yesterday we released a letter from more than
14 100 top CEOs in the city.

15 Our members employ over a million
16 New Yorkers, and feel very strongly in support of
17 the continuation of mayoral control as a solid
18 governance system that holds the Mayor accountable
19 to the voters, to parents, and employers.

20 We had experience, for more than 40 years, of
21 chaos in the governance of our school system through
22 the '60s and for years beyond.

23 Those who have been around know that that
24 system was -- did not work, not only for the
25 children in the schools where we saw consistent

1 decline in performance, but it also was a time
2 during which we saw more than a million middle-class
3 New Yorkers leave the city, most of them parents,
4 looking for decent schools for their kids. We saw
5 many of our leading employers leave the city at the
6 same time.

7 So this is not just an issue that's important
8 from the standpoint of the education of the kids.
9 It's also an issue that's important to everyone in
10 the city.

11 And I want to reiterate that, and that's the
12 lens through which the business community looks at
13 education.

14 In addition, they look at this as, in terms
15 of the future: Where are these kids going? How
16 well are these kids going to be prepared for jobs,
17 college, careers, and advanced training and
18 education.

19 And we think, again, that mayoral control
20 provides the basis for establishing strong
21 partnerships.

22 Between the -- 1968 and 2003, we, basically,
23 opened no career- and technical-education programs.
24 And it's only post mayoral control that there has
25 been a real effort to engage employers in skills,

1 training, and development.

2 In fact -- and then, in fact, that area is
3 being greatly expanded now, and we're very hopeful
4 that that will continue to be another area that we
5 can improve.

6 The ability to employers to work -- employers
7 to work efficiently with the school system, again,
8 really depends on a good governance system, a solid
9 governance system.

10 And we think it's imminently clear that
11 current the system is far better than anything
12 that's gone before it.

13 We're very concerned that, regardless of who
14 was mayor, regardless who is chancellor, that there
15 be a way that we can see who is responsible.

16 Under the old system, no one was in charge.

17 So that's, basically, our message.

18 We feel very strongly on this subject.

19 We have, over the years, been advocates for
20 increased investment in the schools: for stronger
21 school leadership, for charter schools, for school
22 reform.

23 We've been very active in Albany on all those
24 topics, and this is one that we've been involved
25 with for long before it was enacted, because the

1 problems were obvious. And we worked with the
2 Legislature to craft the legislation that developed
3 this -- the system we have now.

4 We strongly support its extension.

5 MARCUS A. WINTERS: Good afternoon.

6 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on
7 this important topic.

8 My name is Marcus Winters. I'm an economist
9 who studies education policy as a senior fellow at
10 the Manhattan Institute, and also as an associate
11 professor in the College of Education in the
12 University of Colorado in Colorado Springs.

13 I've studied several aspects of
14 New York City's public school system, including as
15 related to school choice and accountability, in
16 charter schools and accountability.

17 I want to begin my remarks by saying, as you
18 suggested to start with, that I do recommend
19 extending mayoral control of the city schools for a
20 substantial period of time.

21 I believe mayoral control in New York City
22 has proven to be a far better system than what we
23 had before.

24 Put simply, a mayor is in a better position
25 to lead and be held accountable for the performance

1 of a major urban school system than as any other
2 body.

3 That said -- and my endorsement of mayoral
4 control comes, despite the fact that I'm a vocal
5 critic of many of the policies of this current
6 administration.

7 That said, I do think there are areas that
8 the body -- that this body should discuss with the
9 Mayor within the current conversation of mayoral
10 control.

11 I'm going to focus my testimony today on the
12 issue of school accountability, and what's happened
13 with the accountability system in New York City.

14 School assessment accountability system is
15 extremely important to any urban system, especially
16 one the size, complexity of -- and importance of New
17 York City's.

18 The aspects of the accountability system
19 represents the district's view of what makes for an
20 effective school.

21 And it provides the district with an
22 opportunity to push its lowest performers to
23 improve.

24 Under the previous administration, the city
25 schools were assessed according to student

1 performance and growth on standardized tests, along
2 with surveys of parents, teachers, and students.

3 And at the end of this, they received a
4 grade, from A through F, that assessed their overall
5 performance on all these measures.

6 Over time, the current administration has
7 fund -- has changed its accountability system in a
8 way that has fundamentally altered the city's vision
9 of what makes for an effective school.

10 The first, and most obvious, change to the
11 accountability system was the decision to end the
12 practice of presenting each school with a letter
13 grade.

14 In fact, the current system doesn't provide
15 the summary measure of the school's overall
16 performance at all.

17 That decision to eliminate the summary letter
18 grade was made, despite empirical evidence that
19 schools who received a failing grade under the prior
20 system made substantial improvements the following
21 year.

22 That was the finding of some of my work, with
23 my colleague, Joshua Cowen (ph.) at Michigan State
24 University, and another -- by economist
25 Jonah Rockoff (ph.) at Columbia, and Leslie Turner

1 who's now at the University of Maryland.

2 In our paper, we also show that the
3 improvements that came from the upgrade stuck with
4 the kids a couple years later, suggesting that there
5 were real gains made by the students not caused by
6 testing manipulation.

7 In a forthcoming report, I returned to the
8 issue of New York City's school-grading system, and
9 what my analysis shows is that, the test-scores
10 improvement following the F grade, that we saw early
11 in the policy, was still detectable the last year
12 the grades were given.

13 So there was still a positive effect from the
14 policy that was going on.

15 And then what I further show is that this
16 effect dissipated immediately following removal
17 of the summary letter grades.

18 So, basically, what we're seeing is that
19 there was a positive-treatment effect. The F grades
20 were working to make the worst schools better.

21 Once those F grades were gone, that positive
22 treatment went away.

23 To a great degree, New York City's prior
24 accountability system met many of the criteria that
25 we need of an effective accountability system.

1 Schools were ranked according to a
2 well-understood grading system. The results were
3 wildly reported.

4 And what we saw from research is that that
5 policy was working to help the most -- the system's
6 worst schools to improve.

7 The most recent manifestations of New York
8 accountability system lacks that under --
9 well-understood scale that we saw in the prior
10 system.

11 At least as important as issuing the summary
12 letter performances, and I think that's of
13 tremendous importance, are the factors that underlie
14 the district's assessment of school quality.

15 And that also has changed from -- in this
16 current administration in ways that I think are
17 problematic.

18 So when the City first removed the letter
19 grades, they actually reported almost identical
20 information about school quality.

21 That has been changing over time.

22 So, the year after that, the school -- the
23 City fundamentally changed the parent surveys.

24 So, that used to be very focused on the
25 parents' perceptions of the school's expectation for

1 the child's performance and how they're reaching
2 that.

3 Most of -- all of those questions have been
4 replaced with, I think, questions that I think are
5 less helpful about the parents' perception.

6 More problematic, in my opinion, are the
7 planned upcoming changes that have been signaled by
8 the Administration.

9 According to the technical documents of last
10 year's school-quality reports, the Administration
11 plans to phase out important measures of student
12 achievement -- student academic progress on
13 standardized tests from the school-quality reports,
14 starting next year.

15 Despite the controversy surrounding them,
16 these measures of student test-score growth are
17 essential for separating the school's contribution
18 to student learning from that of family background.

19 To put the extent of the change into context,
20 measured student progress on the tests accounted for
21 60 percent of the school's overall score under the
22 prior accountability system.

23 Now that said, the old system wasn't perfect,
24 and, in fact, it was tweaked over time. And not all
25 the changes this current administration has done is

1 all bad.

2 In particular, a central feature of the
3 current system is the focus of reviews of
4 experienced educators who spend time in the schools.

5 I think that's a helpful thing.

6 There are things that qualitative assessments
7 of school quality can tell us that test scores and
8 surveys might miss.

9 That said, objective measures of school
10 performance are essential for anchoring that
11 accountability system.

12 Without the grounding of student test-score
13 growth, these quality -- qualitative assessments
14 could be rubber stamps over time, just as subjective
15 teacher evaluations were for so long.

16 Now -- so I would strongly suggest that this
17 body keep control of New York City schools in the
18 Office of the Mayor, but I would also suggest that
19 the Legislature make clear its expectations that,
20 whoever is mayor, operates the schools within a
21 framework that prioritizes student learning and
22 presents the public with useful and actionable
23 information about school performance.

24 Thank you very much.

25 LEONIE HAIMSON: Thank you,

1 Senators Marcellino and Addabbo, for allowing me to
2 testify today.

3 My name is Leonie Haimson. I'm the executive
4 director of Class Size Matters, a citywide advocacy
5 organization dedicated to providing information on
6 the benefits of smaller classes.

7 I'm also the co-chair of the national
8 organization Parent Coalition for Student Privacy;
9 on the steering committee of the statewide coalition
10 New York State Allies for Public Education; and on
11 the board of The Network for Public Education.

12 I'm also a member of NYC Kids PAC, which
13 released an education report card for the Mayor
14 yesterday, copies of which you should have received
15 along with my testimony.

16 This report card grades the Mayor in several
17 education categories, based primarily on whether he
18 followed up on his campaign promises.

19 The members of NYC Kids PAC include four
20 sitting presidents of citywide and community
21 education councils, three past presidents of CECs,
22 and one sitting member of the Panel for Educational
23 Policy.

24 So I hope you take these -- this report card
25 seriously.

1 It exhibits particular disappointment with
2 the lack of parent input at the school district and
3 citywide levels.

4 Citywide and community education councils
5 remain largely disempowered, with little or no say
6 as to co-locations and space planning, and DOE has
7 argued in court that school leadership teams have
8 only advisory powers, in an effort to keep their
9 meetings closed to the public.

10 As Mona mentioned, we're one of the
11 plaintiffs on that lawsuit, which we won in the
12 State Supreme Court, which the DOE has now appealed
13 to the Appellate Court.

14 School overcrowding and class size also
15 continue to be major concerns.

16 For the purpose of this testimony, however,
17 I speak only for my organization Class Size Matters.

18 I have opposed mayoral control, and have done
19 so since its inception in 2003.

20 Unlike others who have switched their
21 positions depending on who was mayor and what
22 policies he espouses, I have been consistent in my
23 views.

24 I was part of the parent commission on school
25 governance that issued a report in 2009, that

1 recommended a school board without a mayoral
2 majority, replaced, in part, by six parents to be
3 selected by CECs.

4 Last year I co-authored a column in the
5 "Gotham Gazette," with Shino Tanikawa, the president
6 of the NYC Kids PAC, and the community education
7 council in District 2 in Manhattan, in which we
8 pointed out many of the weaknesses in the system.

9 And that op-ed is appended to this testimony.

10 I also want to mention that I think it's
11 unfortunate that more parent-leaders were not
12 allowed to testify today, including Shino, who
13 represents a school district that I think is
14 composed of four Senate Districts, it's that large.

15 So I really would appreciate if you allowed
16 more parents to testify, and you opened up this
17 hearing more to the public.

18 Why have we consistently opposed this
19 governance system?

20 Mayoral control, as it exists here, in
21 Chicago, and a few other cities around the country,
22 is inherently undemocratic, and provides no real
23 checks and balances to autocratic rule.

24 As a result, it has too often suffered from
25 insufficient input from parents and community

1 members closest to the ground; the result being
2 damaging policies and unwise spending.

3 Our entire system of democratic rule, from
4 the federal government, on down, relies on the
5 separation of powers.

6 Can you imagine if our Governor decided to
7 dismiss the State Legislature on the grounds that it
8 was an inefficient governance system?

9 I don't think you guys would like that very
10 much.

11 It is simply unacceptable, and I think
12 racist, that the only places where mayoral control
13 currently exists have student populations that are a
14 majority of students of color.

15 Suburban/rural, cities and towns in the rest
16 of the state, and the country, would never accept
17 such a system which disempowers voters, including
18 the towns that many Senators represent; and neither
19 should we in New York City.

20 I would add that nearly every poll that has
21 surveyed New York City voters have found that a
22 majority are against mayoral control, and in favor
23 of the executive sharing power with an independent
24 school board or the city council.

25 And we're not alone.

1 In Chicago where mayoral control was first
2 instituted, there is now a big push, including
3 legislation, to replace the governance system with
4 an elected school board.

5 The same is happening in Detroit which has
6 suffered under one-man rule by the governors and
7 elected emergency manager.

8 Both cities have suffered a real lack of
9 accountability in the top-down management of their
10 schools.

11 What about the record here in New York City?

12 Despite claims of great progress, we analyze
13 the test scores of city students on the NAEPs, the
14 most reliable national assessments that exist.

15 When gains in student test scores, since
16 mayoral control was instituted in 2003, are
17 disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and economic
18 status, it is apparent that New York City schools
19 have come out second-to-last among the 10 cities in
20 terms of improved achievement.

21 Though it's true that graduation rates have
22 increased, our gains mirror increased rates
23 nationally, and many have also argued that it's the
24 increased pressure on our schools to inflate their
25 figures through discredited methods, such as credit

1 recoveries and the like, that have achieved these
2 rate increases.

3 The justification for mayoral control is
4 often that the previous system was scandal-ridden
5 with corrupt local school boards exhibiting
6 patronage and the like.

7 But the reality is, that the community school
8 boards had the power to hire and fire taken away
9 from them in 1996, which was years before mayoral
10 control was instituted.

11 Moreover, the waste and fraud that continues
12 under the current system far outstrips what occurred
13 previously.

14 There were multiple multimillion-dollar
15 no-bid contracts awarded under Mayor Bloomberg, that
16 subsequently were found out to be wasteful and/or
17 corrupt.

18 One of the largest related to a contract
19 awarded Custom Computer Specialists, to provide
20 Internet wiring, with the vendor hired by
21 Ross Lanham, a DOE consultant.

22 As a 2011 report from the special
23 investigators found, Lanham and CCS were involved in
24 a massive kickback scheme that stole millions from
25 the DOE. The CEO of CCS and Lanham also started a

1 real-estate business together.

2 Lanham was later indicted and sent to jail,
3 and the FCC excluded the DOE from more than
4 100 million of E-rate funds because of the
5 (indiscernible) scandal.

6 Yet, in 2015, I learned that a new contract,
7 amounting to \$1.1 billion over 5 years, renewable to
8 2 billion over 9 years, was about to be awarded to
9 the same vendor for more Internet wiring and
10 equipment.

11 After the media was alerted, the contract was
12 hurriedly renegotiated by DOE, down, in 24 hours, to
13 627 million, suggesting how inflated it was in the
14 first place.

15 Yet, the Panel for Educational Policy
16 rubber-stamped the contract, 10-to-1, with the only
17 The Bronx representative voting no.

18 Luckily, city hall was alerted to the
19 controversy through the media, and, subsequently,
20 canceled the contract.

21 They later rebid the contract to other
22 vendors, at a savings estimated between a hundred
23 sixty-three and seven hundred twenty-seven million
24 dollars.

25 An E-rate consent decree was issued by the

1 FCC, imposing a \$3 million fine on what they called
2 "massive fraud," and ordering that an independent
3 monitor and auditor be hired at city expense, while
4 warning the DOE to refrain from engaging with any
5 companies previously involved with Lanham.

6 Yet, as we recently learned, the DOE has
7 awarded nine new contracts to CCS since the special
8 investigator report, worth more than 20 million, and
9 seven of them are current.

10 In fact, we learned that the company has
11 received over 158,000 in payments from the DOE and
12 the School Construction Authority in just the last
13 two weeks.

14 Since the CCS controversy, along with former
15 member Patrick Sullivan, we formed a citizens'
16 contract-oversight committee, and we've identified
17 many wasteful contracts, including several awarded
18 companies previously found to have overcharged the
19 City and the State by millions of dollars. These
20 include a contract, approved just last night to the
21 PEP, to a special-ed vendor found to have submitted
22 nearly \$3 million in non-reimbursable expenses to
23 the State, according to a December audit from the
24 State Comptroller's Office.

25 Yet never, to my knowledge, has the PEP voted

1 to reject a single DOE contract.

2 So when Senator Peralta asked about that, I
3 think what the DOE was responding to was the five
4 co-location proposals that were either revised, and
5 one of them was canceled; not the contracts.

6 I've asked a current member of the PEP if
7 they've ever actually voted down a contract, and
8 I've also asked past PEP members, and they both said
9 no.

10 In addition, as has been recently reported,
11 the PEP members have never been provided with the
12 minimum of six hours of training on their
13 financial-oversight accountability and fiduciary
14 responsibilities required of all school-board
15 members by a 2005 state law, despite requests to
16 receive this training from at least one board
17 member; nor does the board has an internal audit
18 committee, as the law requires.

19 The lone member who voted against the
20 CCS contract recently resigned under pressure, and
21 both he and another former member,
22 Norm Fruchter (ph.), have stated publicly for the
23 record, that the panel does not provide sufficient
24 checks and balances to mayoral control.

25 I would be remiss if I didn't speak about

1 class size, the top concern of parents, according to
2 the DOE's own surveys.

3 In -- June 20 -- 2003, the Campaign for
4 Fiscal Equity case, the state's highest court found
5 that students were deprived of their constitutional
6 right to a sound, basic education because class
7 sizes were too large.

8 In 2007, the Contracts for Excellence law was
9 passed by the Legislature, which required
10 New York City to reduce class sizes in all grades;
11 yet, class sizes sharply increased, and, now, in --
12 Grades K through 3 are more than 14 percent larger
13 than when the original decision was made.

14 Though average class sizes have stabilized
15 since 2013, the number of students in classes of
16 30 or more in the early grades continues to go up.

17 This fall, there were over 48,000 students in
18 classes of 30 or more in the early grades, more than
19 350,000 students in classes that large in all
20 grades -- more than one-third of all public-school
21 students in gen ed, inclusion, and gifted classes.

22 In their C4E plan, the DOE said they would
23 now focus their class size-reduction efforts on the
24 renewal schools; yet, our analysis showed that
25 nearly 40 percent of these schools did not reduce

1 class size one iota. About 60 percent continue to
2 feature classes of 30 or more, and only 7 percent
3 have capped class sizes at appropriate C4E levels,
4 of 20 in K through 3, 23 in Grades 4 through 8, and
5 25 in core high school classes.

6 And, honestly, I do not think the program can
7 succeed with classes as large as they continue to be
8 in these schools.

9 So what should be done?

10 I would like to propose, as our parent
11 commission did seven years ago, that an office of an
12 inspector general be created to report on -- to the
13 public on any case of malfeasance, corruption, or
14 mismanagement by school-system employees;

15 As well as an ombudsperson, to address and
16 resolve parents complaints, and provide regular
17 reports on how services and policies could be
18 improved.

19 CEC should also be given the authority to
20 approve co-locations, as they currently do have
21 in-school rezonings.

22 I also think it would be useful for the city
23 comptroller and the public advocate to have their
24 own appointees on the panel.

25 As to the school board itself, if its members

1 cannot be elected directly by the citizens of
2 New York, as happens in the rest of the state, at
3 the very least, the DOE should be made subject to
4 city law.

5 Currently, the Department of Education is the
6 only city agency exempt from laws passed by the city
7 council, other than oversight legislation.

8 I don't think many people realize what a
9 unique position the DOE is in, in not having any
10 local checks and balances in this way.

11 The police department, housing, and
12 children's services, all the other city agencies,
13 are under the mayor's control; and, yet, subject to
14 the checks and balances of the city council.

15 Yet, I've never heard anyone claim that this
16 system unacceptably dilutes the mayor's authority
17 when it comes to addressing either crime or the need
18 for more housing.

19 Why should our public schools be any
20 different?

21 Why should they have fewer checks and
22 balances than any other city agency?

23 Thank you for your time, and I'd be happy to
24 answer any questions you might have.

25 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

1 LAURA ALTSCHULER: Thank you.

2 First of all, Senator Marcellino and
3 Senator Addabbo, thank you for your time and
4 patience.

5 Education is important to us, and we all
6 appreciate it.

7 I'm Laura Altschuler, a past president of the
8 League; currently on the board of directors.

9 As you know, the League operates on three
10 levels. And the national League of Women Voters
11 really began building a foundation to equal access
12 to public education; followed by the state League,
13 which was also part of the strong push for financing
14 education and the campaign for fiscal equity; and
15 here in the New York City League, we actually did a
16 study on how the schools should best be served.

17 And -- I'm paraphrasing my testimony, but you
18 won't object, I'm sure.

19 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Bless you.

20 LAURA ALTSCHULER: We didn't support mayoral
21 control initially, but we concluded, after
22 observation and study, that making the City
23 Administration responsible for the operation of the
24 school system afforded much greater transparency and
25 accountability.

1 And I would like to say, when we say
2 "control," we really mean responsibility.

3 Someone who was here earlier mentioned that
4 there should be more parents here, you know, who
5 have children in the schools.

6 I attended the New York City public schools,
7 my children went to the New York City public schools
8 and, currently, my grandchildren are.

9 And I think it's important that people
10 continue to be interested in education whether or
11 not they have children in the public schools.

12 And we at the League are very much -- you
13 know, feel that that needs to continue.

14 We actually urge the renewal of mayoral
15 control for six years; and the reason why, we think
16 the children and our schools as are important as our
17 infrastructure, for building bridges or replacing
18 water mains.

19 There's is -- there are certain things that
20 take a very long time to achieve, and they don't
21 happen with one year or two years of change.

22 And that's why I like the word "mayoral
23 responsibility."

24 Since I just told you how long I have been
25 involved in education in the city, you will know

1 I've lived through teacher strikes,
2 decentralization. Before that, centralization. And
3 then, again.

4 And you have to have someone who continues to
5 be responsible, and people need someone that they
6 can go to, whoever is in charge, the assistants, or
7 whatever.

8 But you cannot have what we had before, and
9 that's why we think, whether you call it "mayoral
10 control" or "mayor responsibility and control," it
11 must continue.

12 But there's always time for improvement, and
13 with your permission, I just want to make a few
14 specific recommendations.

15 Fixed terms for the members of the Panel of
16 Educational Policy:

17 They should serve fixed terms of two or
18 three years.

19 Right now, they serve at the pleasure of the
20 mayor or the borough president who appointed them.

21 Now, we're assuming that they were appointed
22 because of expertise and judgment. And they should
23 be free to study, review, vote, on educational
24 policy without fear of being replaced by, or
25 disagree with, an appointing official.

1 This happened, to the detriment of the school
2 system, in an earlier administration.

3 The Department of Education should follow the
4 procurement rules and regulations which apply to
5 other city agencies, including, but not limited to,
6 publicly advertising contract opportunities, and
7 holding hearings on non-competitively-bid contracts.

8 We're not talking about what individual
9 principals or school system might need, but these
10 large citywide contracts should abide by the same.

11 And, the meetings of the Panels of
12 Educational Policy and community district
13 educational council should be public and subject to
14 the state and city public-meeting laws. Agendas
15 should be published in advance on the department's
16 website, and meetings webcast.

17 And on -- the community district educational
18 councils should be consulted before any school,
19 traditional or charter, elementary, middle, or
20 high school, is open, closed, consolidated,
21 restructured, renamed, or collated within district.

22 Everyone in the community, and especially the
23 parents, need to be involved in this.

24 And the provisions of mayoral control in
25 school governments approved by the State of New York

1 should be made a part of the New York City Charter.

2 Most people do not know that the Department
3 of Education is not in the city charter.

4 We've been sort of wanting that every time
5 there was a change in city government.

6 So in designating the mayor as the New York
7 City official responsible for the operation of
8 New York City's public schools, the State of
9 New York has recognized the department as a city
10 agency; and, as such, it belongs in the New York
11 City Charter.

12 At present, there is no delineation of powers
13 or responsibilities of the Department of Education
14 in the New York City Charter.

15 This was justified by the temporary nature of
16 the government structure; but "temporary" is now
17 15 years, and going on.

18 There is ample opportunity to amend the
19 charter if changes in governance are enacted, but to
20 ignore the existence of an agency which accounts for
21 20 percent of the city's budget cannot be justified.

22 And an overly extended debate about mayoral
23 control is problematic, and no one has suggested a
24 reliable alternative.

25 And we're certainly not proposing a return to

1 the previously-constituted board of education.

2 In fact, a failure to renew mayoral control
3 will result in reversal to a system which no longer
4 exists.

5 More than one million children attend our
6 city's public schools. Their education is of
7 primary importance to their and our future, and the
8 governance of our schools should not be part of
9 negotiations over issues which really have nothing
10 to do with education.

11 Extending investment tax credits to wealthy
12 New Yorkers who contribute to private and parochial
13 schools will not improve public education. If
14 anything, it will reduce in -- result in reduced tax
15 revenues which the State uses to fund our schools.

16 And we really appreciate the time that you
17 have taken to listen to the League's testimony.

18 And, I'm not going ask if you have any
19 questions, because I have a feeling that I'm the
20 last speaker, and that's probably the last thing
21 that you want.

22 But we are here to answer you today; or, if
23 you -- we have people in the state who are always
24 available from the League of Women Voters.

25 Thank you so much.

1 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Appreciate you coming,
2 and we appreciate your testimony, but you're not the
3 last speaker.

4 LAURA ALTSCHULER: Oh, okay.

5 SENATOR MARCELLINO: We do have two more to
6 come.

7 LAURA ALTSCHULER: Oh, I was just looking at
8 the list that I read.

9 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you very much,
10 though, for your testimony.

11 We appreciate you coming.

12 LAURA ALTSCHULER: Thank you.

13 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Let's call
14 Richard Kahan.

15 RICHARD KAHAN: I think I owe you both a
16 drink.

17 It's very kind of you to stay this long and
18 listen to all of the testimony.

19 SENATOR MARCELLINO: That's why they pay us
20 the big bucks.

21 RICHARD KAHAN: And I do have a fond memory
22 of working with the State Senate when
23 Warren Anderson was the head.

24 A lot of people think that we have a
25 convention center in Battery Park City here, because

1 of the -- because we had a democratic mayor and a
2 democratic governor at the time, Hugh Kerry and
3 Koch.

4 Not at all true.

5 It's Warren Anderson that made the things
6 possible, on his time table.

7 I appreciate the opportunity to testify in
8 favor of mayoral control.

9 The Urban Assembly has 21 schools,
10 9,000 students. We have no screening whatsoever.
11 20 percent special ed, et cetera.

12 A very underprivileged population, we've done
13 very well with that.

14 We have graduation rates that exceed the
15 city's significantly, and given our
16 African-American, Latino, population, by about
17 13 percent for that population. 80 percent of our
18 kids are going to college.

19 And I dare say, that many never would have
20 gone to college, let alone graduate, were it not for
21 small schools, which is what we are.

22 In addition, our colleagues at New Visions
23 and Outward Bound, and international schools, who
24 you heard from, Joe Luft (ph.), in Albany, shared
25 the same view.

1 We are all predominantly small schools that
2 came out of the reforms made possible in the
3 Bloomberg Administration.

4 And I will say that I'm not an educator.
5 I've watched from a distance for most of my life,
6 until the last 10 or 12 years.

7 And what I heard one mayor after another say
8 was: If I had control over this, I'd fix it. But,
9 I don't have control.

10 "I'd blow up 110 Livingston," that was a
11 direct quote from one of the mayors, "if I had
12 control over the DOE."

13 Then, all of a sudden, came along the man
14 that said: I want control, and I want you to hold
15 me accountable.

16 I thought that was the craziest political
17 statement I ever heard, and at one point I told him
18 that.

19 But he meant it, and I think it made all the
20 difference in the world.

21 And, personally, that was the point at which
22 I looked and said, You know, I'd like to get
23 involved in education now, because this is serious.
24 Nobody is passing the buck anymore.

25 So without mayoral control, those reforms,

1 and other reforms, would not have taken place.

2 I give this administration credit for
3 pre-K -- universal pre-K. If they did nothing else,
4 that is a great legacy. For the renewal schools,
5 community schools.

6 But it's is not just about this
7 administration either.

8 There will be other administrations. None of
9 them will have the opportunity to and the time to
10 create sustainable reform programs without a number
11 of years to do it in.

12 If you have an idea today, it will take a
13 year or two to implement it. Then you want to test
14 it and you want to measure it, and you want to see
15 what's wrong, you want to fix things, you want to
16 tinker.

17 And at the end of that process, you have
18 something else you'd like to do to raise the bar
19 even higher.

20 That is not a one-year process, and it's not
21 a two-year process.

22 It takes time, and we can't do it without
23 multi-year mayoral control.

24 I thank you very much.

25

1 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

2 Mr. Walcott.

3 DENNIS WALCOTT: How are you?

4 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Okay. Good to see you.

5 DENNIS WALCOTT: Thank you, sir.

6 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you for coming
7 back.

8 DENNIS WALCOTT: Oh, my pleasure.

9 No, I had to run across the street to testify
10 before the city council for my regular job now.

11 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Did you see the Mayor
12 over there?

13 DENNIS WALCOTT: I did not.

14 [Laughter.]

15 DENNIS WALCOTT: I went straight in, and
16 testified before the city council about libraries
17 today.

18 So...

19 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Bless you. Worthy
20 places.

21 DENNIS WALCOTT: I totally agree with you.

22 And in Queens, as Senator Addabbo knows, we
23 have 63 great libraries.

24 But I'm not here today to talk about
25 libraries for this building.

1 And I want to say, good afternoon to you,
2 Chair, and to Senator Addabbo, and to all the other
3 Senators here earlier.

4 As you know, my name is Dennis Walcott,
5 former New York City schools chancellor; and, also,
6 former deputy mayor of education under
7 Mayor Bloomberg; and current president and CEO of
8 the Queens Library System.

9 And I want to thank you for the opportunity
10 to discuss this critical issue of mayoral control of
11 the schools; or, really, dealing with school
12 governance, and what it actually means.

13 And as you may know, my history with school
14 governance goes back to the beginning of this prior
15 administration, in 2002.

16 But my involvement with education, both,
17 formally, was not through Mayor Bloomberg, but
18 really started before then, when I was appointed to
19 the old Board of Education by Mayor Dinkins, back in
20 1992, 1993.

21 And then, in the mid-1990s, I was appointed
22 by Chancellor Rudy Crew, as a trustee of a local
23 school board, the one up in district Harlem,
24 District 5, that had been suspended, and I became
25 president of that trustee board.

1 And I have the unique and dubious distinction
2 of having served as the last Board of Education
3 president, from June 30th to August 11th of 2009.

4 So when I was here earlier and I heard
5 Senator Addabbo's question about, what's next if
6 it's not renewed? that was what was next, and it had
7 lapsed at that particular point, as you remember,
8 and there was a lot of horse-trading on who would be
9 on the board, and, the Board of Education back then,
10 who would become the president?

11 And I became the Board of Ed president as a
12 result of the votes of Mayor Bloomberg, and
13 Helen Marshall, who was borough president of Queens
14 at that time.

15 And it shouldn't be that way.

16 In 2002, when Mayor Bloomberg sought
17 school-governance reform, we aimed to achieve
18 accountability and responsibility for the schools,
19 not just as a prize for any one mayor in particular,
20 but as a fundamental change in the governance
21 structure that would secure the future of our city's
22 1.1 million schoolchildren.

23 The state's resulting historic
24 school-governance legislation provided an
25 unprecedented opportunity to transform a largely

1 underperforming bureaucracy into an exemplary system
2 focused on what is best for children.

3 The school system we inherited was a deeply
4 troubled one, which, despite the best intentions and
5 the good work of many dedicated people, did not
6 provide and meet the needs of our children with
7 education that they needed and deserved.

8 The seven-member Board of Education, beset by
9 competing agendas, failed to provide the kind of
10 coherence and accountability and effectiveness
11 needed to ensure a high-quality education for every
12 child across the city.

13 And as you know, you indicated you were a
14 teacher, and we were all involved. You had a
15 disjointed system that was dysfunctional. And you
16 had one district that operated one way, another
17 district that operated another way.

18 And it was really total chaos.

19 Instead, equity, patronage, and waste, and
20 dysfunction plagued the system back then.

21 School funding was based on more on who you
22 knew in the politics than based on the need.

23 Many teachers had to wait months for a
24 paycheck.

25 I'm not sure exactly when you started, but

1 I know when we became in place, in 2002 --

2 SENATOR MARCELLINO: '68.

3 DENNIS WALCOTT: 1968.

4 -- and I know when we started in 2002, before
5 control was given, teachers still had to wait up to
6 two to three to four months, sometimes, to get paid,
7 and that was across the system.

8 And that shouldn't be that way, and we were
9 able to address that right away.

10 Our poorer students were trapped in
11 lowest-performing schools in the city and had few
12 options.

13 Only half of the students were graduating at
14 some schools, and the rate was closer to 20 percent
15 at some of the other schools.

16 School-governance reform gives New York
17 City's mayors the ability to develop and implement a
18 clear and bold vision for teaching and learning, to
19 plan strategically to bring together the resources
20 and agencies of the city around education and put
21 the children's interests first.

22 As a result, since the establishment of the
23 school-governance system, dropout rates have plunged
24 by half; graduation rates have risen from, on
25 average, 50 percent, to now, as the Chancellor

1 indicated earlier, to, roughly 70.5 percent -- a
2 significant increase after stagnation under the
3 prior governance structure.

4 Rather than being consigned to failing
5 schools, students have benefited from the best
6 school-choice system, that can always be improved
7 on; teachers are paid on time; we've allocated funds
8 throughout our schools more equitably to meet the
9 needs of our students; and students' achievements
10 have increased across the board.

11 The fate of control should not depend on the
12 policy of the programs of any particular
13 administration.

14 That's why I'm here today.

15 It's not about one mayor or another mayor.

16 It is about this mayor, the prior mayor, and
17 future mayors to come.

18 And, it should always be debated, but at the
19 same time, governance is extremely important as it
20 exists. It is a system that we need to maintain.

21 The governance structure we have today makes
22 clear with whom the debate should take place, which
23 was impossible with the multi-headed hydra of the
24 old Board of Education.

25 Mayoral control is about making the mayor,

1 elected by the people of New York City, take
2 responsibility for the education of our city, and
3 effectuate the best education possible for our
4 children.

5 The school-governance structure the State
6 established in 2002, and has since renewed, must
7 outlive any mayoralty if we are to continue the
8 tremendous progress over the 14 years.

9 We must not add layers of bureaucracy to the
10 checks and balances. We have systems in place, like
11 your Committee, and other committees, as well as the
12 State Education Department, as well as the
13 comptroller and the state comptroller, to do the
14 appropriate monitoring and provide the
15 check-and-balance system to the current system.

16 And we must try to maintain that. The future
17 of our children and city depends on it, and the
18 accountability should rest with the mayor.

19 And that's why I'm here today.

20 And thank you for the opportunity to testify
21 before, you, Senator Addabbo, and also the others
22 who were here before.

23 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you very much,
24 Mr. Walcott, for coming and being here.

25 Your experience and expertise is respected,

1 and your testimony is appreciated.

2 DENNIS WALCOTT: Thank you, sir.

3 SENATOR MARCELLINO: If there was one thing
4 that you could change in the current system of
5 mayoral control, what would it be?

6 DENNIS WALCOTT: Great question.

7 I think more regular meetings than you may
8 have them, but from a committee structure, with the
9 Department of Education, I think that type of
10 information going back and forth.

11 And as I heard the Chancellor indicated, and
12 I indicated, that Albany was my sixth borough, on
13 the regular dialogue between Albany and the DOE is
14 extremely important, as well as with city hall.

15 And so, to me, I think increasing that; and,
16 therefore, that would, both, increase the
17 accountability mechanisms, but more importantly,
18 provide the regular information to the elected
19 officials that they need to have.

20 So that would be one thing.

21 I think, and I think the Chancellor talked
22 about this as well, always finding new ways to
23 improve transparency of information.

24 People are starving for information.

25 And while we did it in our administration,

1 I know the current mayor is doing it, always looking
2 for new ways to get information out to our parents,
3 to empower them, to make sure that they're fully
4 invested.

5 And people always talk about parental
6 involvement.

7 And I know that we try very hard, the current
8 administration is working hard at it.

9 Finding new ways to deal with parental
10 involvement in the accountability is extremely
11 important.

12 I think the ability to make sure that the
13 Chancellor, through the Mayor, has the ability to
14 have the coherent system that's in place, and was in
15 place before, and making sure you always deal with
16 the coherence of the system, is extremely important
17 in how you constantly ramp that up.

18 And as Mayor Bloomberg always said to all of
19 us, about the next administration, and future
20 administrations, is to build on the success, and how
21 to learn about what happened before, and analyze it
22 and build off of that.

23 I think all those are parts of next steps to
24 make the system better, to serve the needs of the
25 children.

1 And I think with the debate that's going on
2 with Albany right now, especially with the State
3 Education Department, once we have a system that is
4 in alignment with SED, and dealing with a curriculum
5 that everyone signs on to as an approved of, that's
6 at high standards, I think that then allows that
7 next step to take place as well.

8 And, to me, with that, then you get to a
9 higher milestone, as far as education outcomes for
10 our children.

11 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

12 DENNIS WALCOTT: Thank you, sir.

13 SENATOR ADDABBO: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

14 I want to thank Mr. Walcott for being here,
15 and I want to wish you much success on your new
16 position --

17 DENNIS WALCOTT: Thank you, sir.

18 SENATOR ADDABBO: -- with the Queens
19 libraries. And I do look forward to working with
20 you in that respect.

21 I really appreciate your insight here,
22 because, again, that resumé of yours runs the gamut,
23 as, you know, a member of the old -- the head of the
24 old Board of Ed, deputy mayor of education,
25 chancellor of education.

1 Again, I think this is a great moment for us
2 to get this kind of input.

3 Take us back to 2009, when there was the work
4 to renew mayoral control, and at the time.

5 Because I mentioned it earlier, when you got
6 this moment of an expiration, we have this
7 opportunity to improve.

8 And back in 2009, there were improvements.

9 We improved the role of the PEPs, the CECs,
10 the parental input.

11 Take us through that process of renewal, as
12 we grapple with it now.

13 DENNIS WALCOTT: Sure, I mean, I would love
14 to.

15 And I remember it very well, in that, we
16 didn't necessarily see eye-to-eye back then.

17 And people had their inputs, as far as what
18 should be the role of parent-coordinators, the role
19 of the CECs, the role of the PEPs.

20 And there was a lot of debate, as you well
21 know, and that's why it lapsed at that particular
22 point in time.

23 But I think out of that process came a system
24 that was healthier. We established the arts
25 council, the arts committee, of the PEP, and had to

1 have regular reports.

2 And also, financially, we were in a different
3 position than this current mayor is in right now,
4 having more money to fund things.

5 But I think it allowed for more robust debate
6 to take place, and then from that debate, we did
7 some fine-tuning to the CEC, we did some fine-tuning
8 to the PEP as well.

9 And I think the Chancellor alluded to that
10 this morning, as far as those next steps that were
11 taken, to try to improve engagement of the parents
12 itself.

13 But I also remember the downside of it, and
14 that it did lapse, and it was an unknown, what was
15 going to happen, because, it was the end of June
16 through August, if I'm not mistaken, around it
17 lapsing, and the old Board of Ed.

18 And I can tell you, quite frankly, the
19 trading that took place around making sure who was
20 appointed to the board, and that scares me more than
21 anything else.

22 And I think, for an improvement plan, if
23 you're asking about that, I think the Chancellor hit
24 on a lot of things.

25 I think what this administration has done has

1 built on what we started and established.

2 And, Senator, I'm not sure if you mentioned
3 it, or I heard it somewhere else, but, I mean, the
4 system is still relatively new.

5 If you remember the old system existed for --
6 since '68 to 2002, with the decentralized model.

7 And so this has been in place now, 14 years,
8 and I think it's important that we take a look at
9 it, and always try to fine-tune.

10 But I think that where we're at right now is
11 pretty good. I mean, we didn't ignore a lot from
12 the renewal back in 2009.

13 And, quite frankly, I think it's extremely
14 important for it to go way beyond the year,
15 two years, and, quite frankly, even beyond the
16 three years, because whether it's this mayor or
17 another mayor, for planning purposes, for coherence,
18 for stability of the staff patterns, to make sure
19 that people know what's coming up in the future for
20 even accountability, they need to have a multi-year
21 renewal to address that, but I think just
22 fine-tuning around the edges.

23 And I think part of the frustration is that,
24 there just needs to be more information flow, more
25 sharing of information, making sure that information

1 is going out there.

2 And I understand the political dynamics and
3 all that, but, quite frankly, I think the dynamics
4 of pedagogy and instruction have to trump the
5 dynamics of any of the politics that may exist.

6 And, quite frankly, now, not being in city
7 government, I have the ability to just say that.

8 But I think it's more important to always
9 focus the attention, as you've done as a teacher,
10 and as you've done in serving your respective
11 communities, on the outcome for students, and how we
12 increase the outcome, from an educational and
13 pedagogical point of view.

14 SENATOR ADDABBO: Thank you for your
15 testimony, and for highlighting what would happen
16 should mayoral control lapse and us going backwards
17 to another structure.

18 So, thank you very much.

19 DENNIS WALCOTT: Thank you, sir, for the
20 question.

21 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you very much.

22 DENNIS WALCOTT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

23 I appreciate it very much, and thank you.

24 Have a good afternoon.

25 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Before we adjourn, as

1 you just -- you've heard from other speakers, and my
2 colleagues here, too, we're all deeply disappointed
3 that we didn't get the Mayor here.

4 We would have all liked to have heard him,
5 and we all would like to have been able to ask him a
6 few follow-up questions to the last meeting.

7 So I think an opportunity was missed by the
8 Mayor, by not showing up, and, I don't know how to
9 fix that.

10 But, I thank the people who came and offered
11 their testimony, and their written testimony will be
12 part of the public record.

13 And I am told that, anyone who would like
14 to -- where can we see this?

15 This is -- oh, this video of this hearing
16 will be available -- if anyone wants to go to sleep
17 at night, the video of this hearing will be
18 available at the Senate Finance Committee website.

19 So, that could be -- you can hear this all
20 over again.

21 Thank you, and the meeting is adjourned.

22 (Whereupon, at approximately 3:23 p.m.,
23 the public hearing held before the New York State
24 Senate Standing Committee on Education concluded,
25 and adjourned.)