BEFORE THE NEW YORK STATE SENATE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

PUBLIC HEARING:

TO EXAMINE THE MERITS OF EXTENDING

MAYORAL CONTROL OF SCHOOLS IN NEW YORK CITY

Van Buren Hearing Room A
Legislative Office Building - 2nd Floor
Albany, New York

May 4, 2016
10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

PRESIDING:

Senator Carl L. Marcellino
Chair

PRESENT:

Senator George S. Latimer (RM)

Senator Neil D. Breslin

Senator Leroy Comrie

Senator John A. DeFrancisco

Senator Simcha Felder

Senator Martin J. Golden

Senator Jesse E. Hamilton

Senator Brad M. Hoylman

Senator Liz Krueger

Senator Andrew J. Lanza

PRESENT (continued):

Senator Kenneth P. LaValle
Senator Elizabeth Little
Senator Velmanette Montgomery
Senator Terrence P. Murphy
Senator José R. Peralta
Senator Bill Perkins
Senator Roxanne J. Persaud
Senator Michael H. Ranzenhofer
Senator James Sanders, Jr.
Senator Toby Ann Stavisky

SPEAKERS:	PAGE	QUESTIONS
Bill de Blasio Mayor City of New York	6	32
Carmen Fariña Chancellor New York City Dept. of Education	6	32
Joe Herrera Manager of Elected Engagement Families for Excellent Schools	230	242
Ian Rowe CEO Public Prep	230	242
Derrell Bradford Executive Director The New York Campaign for Achievement Now	230	242
Joseph Luft Executive Director Internationals Network For Public Schools, Inc.	262	265
Georgia M. Asciutto Executive Director Jennifer K. Pyle Deputy Director Big 5 Schools	267	272
Robert Lowry Deputy Director New York State Council of School Superintendents	274	280
Julie Marlette Director of Governmental Relations New York State School Boards Assoc.	282	284

---oOo---

SENATOR MARCELLINO: It is our understanding that Chancellor Fariña is on her way.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: She's in the building.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: We've sent out search parties, and she'll be --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Reverse of Elvis has left the building.

Chancellor is in the building.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: She'll be here shortly. I'm going to give her some time to come.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, I will greet your colleagues who have arrived.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Be my guest.

We're calling the hearing to order.

The hearing on the Education Committee, the topic would be on mayoral control of the schools in the city of New York.

We have -- we are pleased to see Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Fariña here, to testify.

And I know there are -- I have a lengthy memo from your office, Mayor.

We all would appreciate, in the interest of time, if this could be summarize by you instead of reading it. We'd appreciate a summary, so that you

could speak to it, and then we can get to questions and answers from my colleagues who are up here.

That would be appreciated.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I'm going do follow your lead, Mr. Chair, but there's a lot of material I wanted everyone to hear.

I'm certainly here for whatever amount of questions and answers you have.

So I'll follow your lead, but I don't --

SENATOR MARCELLINO: This is all going to go in testimony. It will be introduced in whole as testimony.

So, you know, your comments are here, and it will be done.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I'll do my best to compress.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: I'd appreciate it.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: All right. Fair enough.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: To introduce my colleagues:

We have Senator Golden to my right, Marty Golden.

We have Senator Ranzenhofer, we have Senator Persaud, and we have Senator Lanza, and

Senator Felder, who are seated to my right.

Senator Latimer, who's the ranking committee -- or, Ranking Member of the Education Committee, please.

SENATOR LANZA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Joining us today from the Senate Democratic Conference, we have Senator Jesse Hamilton from Brooklyn, Senator Toby Stavisky from Queens, Senator Neil Breslin from Albany, Senator Brad Hoylman from Manhattan, and Senator Liz Krueger, also from Manhattan, and I'm from Westchester County.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: We may see members get up and go from time to time, because there are committees that are meeting and holding sessions at this time, so they may have to go to, you know, temporarily, other meetings.

Others may be joining us because they're already at meetings.

So, we appreciate your time, Mayor.

We appreciate your attention.

This is a very important topic, clearly.

I had a very enjoyable visit to my old high school, with Chancellor Fariña, where I taught for 20 years in the city of New York. So, I was an

employee of the city education system.

I have fond memories, going back.

That's where I met my wife, who was also a teacher; now a full professor at Adelphi University of the School of Education.

So we are an education family, and we respect and cherish teaching and learning, and that's a process.

Mayoral control is a very integral part of the city of New York.

It wasn't there when I was there. It came in after that fact.

And we're here to see how it's working, how it's going along, and we're here to ask questions of you, and, hopefully, we can get to the questions as quickly as possible, because there's session -- there are conferences, I know, at 2:00, and session will be at 3:00.

And I understand you have someplace you have to be earlier than that, so we're going to try to accommodate as much as we possibly can.

Let me just start off with a question.

There was a point in time, Mayor de Blasio, that you did not think highly of mayoral control, and had said so.

Why'd you change your mind?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Well, first of all, Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you; I want to thank the Ranking Minority Member, Senator Latimer; all the members of the Committee.

I want to thank the New York City Subcommittee; Education Subcommittee Chair, Senator Felder.

Thank you for having me.

And, Mr. Chairman, thank you for the service you gave to the children of New York City, and the people of New York City, in the years you worked as a teacher.

I appreciate that deeply.

In fact, my voting record, and my record of public statements, indicates that when Mayor Bloomberg proposed mayoral-control education, I supported him.

Now, you know I didn't always agree with Mayor Bloomberg, but on this area I thought he was right.

And, I've always said I think mayoral control has to be responsive to the needs of communities, the needs of parents.

I think there's a way to implement it in a

particularly responsive fashion. I think Chancellor Fariña has done that very effectively.

But the concept of mayoral control I have supported, and voted in favor of, going back to when it was first introduced by Mayor Bloomberg.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: I know you had some comments that you wanted to make, so, please.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Thank you.

Thank you, I look forward.

Well, again, I want to thank all the members of the Committee, and thank Chancellor Fariña for joining us.

Chancellor Fariña and I go back almost 15 years, to when we were serving District 15, Brooklyn. I was a school-board member. She was our district superintendent.

Just want to affirm the point that, under her leadership, I think our schools are making tremendous strides.

And this is now the -- we brag about the fact that it's Chancellor Fariña's 50th year in education.

I think there's congratulations for that.

[Applause.]

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: It's a survival.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: That's right.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: For that, she needs a medal.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I would agree with that. You should get a medal for that.

But, it also has given her tremendous perspective on the different systems we have had.

As you said Mr. Chairman, we've seen centralized, decentralized, systems...all types of systems.

Chancellor Fariña will attest to the fact that this is the one that she's found to be most effective, and the one that's allowed her to do her work best on behalf of the children.

So that's a key point that I want to make today.

I had the honor of being mayor in the city with the largest school system in America.

The Chancellor is the head of the largest school system in America.

And what we have seen in practice, to the core question you asked, is that mayoral control works.

It allows us to get things done.

It allows us to have real accountability.

It allows us to move major new initiatives, like, pre-K, after-school, Equity and Excellence, which I'll describe in a moment.

We know, at this point in history, things have changed from when many of us were growing up.

Education determines economic destiny.

A very important statistic: A college graduate today earns 1.1 million more dollars over the course of a lifetime than a person who has not graduated from college.

Those kind of realities cause us to have a sense of urgency, and to try to quickly move the school system to more effectiveness.

And I can safely say, under the previous system, which I know -- I knew intimately, and the Chancellor even more so, at time, was often one of the most profoundly wasted realities.

That, the previous system was bureaucratic, caused endless delays, endless troubles, getting to a decision. Major initiates could not be moved effectively; let alone the fact that, sadly, the previous system of governance was often accompanied by a certain amount of corruption in a number of districts.

Mayoral control, in stark contrast,

encourages effective, efficient decision-making, and the ability to make major changes in a school system that needs it on a constant basis.

Now, I remind everyone, the previous system had 32 boards at the local level, with 9 members each. Superintendents reported to them.

There was a seven-member central board named by six different entities.

There was no clear line of accountability. The buck did not stop anywhere. No one was held accountable through our electoral system.

And, in effect, the governance system actually made it harder to run the schools.

And I want to just give you a quote, which I think says at all.

This is from "The New York Times" editorial board back in 1989.

They say, quote:

The system has not worked well.

Lines of authority are confused and sometimes illogical.

Bureaucratic layers have multiplied rather than decreased.

Parents and community groups feeling shut out by professional politicians and special interests.

Shunned school-board elections.

That's what was.

We all know there was a lot of patronage, and a lot of corruption, as I mentioned, and inequalities in the system went unaddressed. They were, in fact, intensified by the previous governance system.

And, therefore, when we saw the contrast with mayoral control, we saw the ability to get things done. We saw a much higher level of transparency. We saw an end to the patronage hiring that had pervaded the previous system.

A lot of people came to the conclusion that this was the only governance system that actually worked.

And, by the way, I'm very proud of the fact that we have received tremendous support, as Mayor Bloomberg did before, in our efforts to continue mayoral control.

We have received support from Republicans and Democrats, from business and labor, from the faith community, non-profit community.

If there is such a thing as consensus in New York City, this is one of the areas where we come closer to a consensus than many others.

There is a broad understanding that this system has worked far better than the previous.

There's also a broad understanding that there is no viable alternative that has been proven to work as well.

All my predecessors, going back to Mayor Beame, Mayor Koch, Mayor Dinkins, Mayor Giuliani, all fought for this change.

And, thank God, Mayor Bloomberg achieved it.

I want to give you a quote from Mayor Giuliani that I think says it all.

He very bluntly said when he was mayor, that the board system, quote, makes no sense.

And he admitted upon leaving office, that his biggest regret was not having achieved mayoral control of education.

Last year, he supported our effort for the renewal of mayoral control, calling it, quote, a matter of intellectual honesty.

And you will remember, when Mayor Bloomberg came to you in 2009, asking for an extension of mayoral control, he said that the alternative of losing mayoral control, quote, he said, that alternative is too devastating to contemplate.

So, again, it's not a surprise that I might

have had my differences with Mayor Bloomberg or Mayor Giuliani on any number of issues, but in this area, there actually is a striking consensus that this is something that made sense and we cannot go back from.

Now, I do want to give you some of the facts of what's happened during the mayoral-control era because I think these facts are striking, because the most important thing is, what have we done for kids?

When we were on the verge of mayoral control being enacted in the 2001-2002 school year, graduation rate was 50.8 percent.

50.8.

By the end of the Bloomberg Administration, operating under mayoral control, graduation rate had increased to 66 percent.

And I give great credit to the mayor and his team for that.

Since we have come into office, we have added to that increase in the graduation rate, another 4.5 percent gain over two years.

Now, for the first time in New York City history, a graduation rate of 70.5 percent. The first time we've been over 70 percent graduation.

All combined, in the mayoral-control era, a 20 percent increase, from 50 percent, to over 70 percent, in our graduation rate.

We've said very clearly, our goal, and we're putting real resources into this goal, is to get over 80 percent in the next 10 years.

We're clear that mayoral control allows us to do big and bold things like that to greatly increase graduation rates.

By the way, there's a lot of people on this panel I know have real looked at the details of education.

Here's another detail you will care about a lot.

11 years ago, 22 percent of kids dropped out of school; never came back, never reengaged.

It is now 9 percent, a third of what it was.

We want to do a lot better. We don't want any kid to leave the process altogether.

When you think about one in five kids used to disengage and never come back, and we've driven that number down substantially, we want to keep driving it down.

Also, key indicators under mayoral control:

Attendance is improving. We're now at

92.2 percent citywide attendance, highest level in the last decade.

Academic performance is improving.

We're now -- for the second year in a row, we've seen student -- since we've been here, student test scores are up in both English and math.

I think people know I'm a believer in multiple measures, so I'm going to quote those test-score numbers, but I'm not saying that's the only way at all to look at things.

We have to always look at multiple measures when we assess, but the test scores give us one indication, and it's favorable.

And, the big things we've been able to do, and thank you again, to all of you, for the support for the pre-K initiative and the after-school initiative.

The support of the Legislature made that possible.

Well, again, remember, on April 1, 2014, you voted for the pre-K allotment.

We had five months to stand up a pre-K program, to take pre-K from 20,000 kids in full-day pre-K, to 53,000.

Only five months to do it.

Under mayoral control that was possible.

We were able to marshal the forces of all the city agencies that had to be a part of making sure the facilities were safe, that the standards were high, that we had the teachers we needed.

That was done in the course of those five months because we had mayoral control.

Today, 68,500 kids in full-day pre-K.

Thank you again, to all of you, for your support.

But even that additional increase, now taking us to the point -- again, starting at 20,000 -- almost 70,000 kids now in full-day pre-K in just two years' time, only achievable through mayoral control.

What we're doing with community schools, I know there's so much support in the Legislature for the community-school concept.

130 community schools in New York City now, where young people are getting a lot more support: mental-health support, physical health, more engagement of their parents and the larger community into the school.

We've been able to do that in 130 schools because of mayoral control.

Renewal schools, where we have 94 schools that have been challenged and troubled, we're putting in the resources to get them right.

We're adding additional instructional time, additional after-school, additional professional development.

We're holding those schools to a high standard, and, what are we seeing already?

Attendance going up, chronic absenteeism going down, in those schools, because we've been able to focus on getting them the right leadership, the right staffing, the right professional development; but, also, that additional time on task that has made all the difference.

We have said very clearly -- while I'm on the topic of renewal schools, a very quick point:

We set out a three-year plan for these renewal schools. We said we had to see results, we had to see improvement, or we would, at that point, be ready to close any schools after three years.

But, we also reserved the right to make actions -- take actions quicker if we did not see the results we wanted.

We have already publicly announced the closure of 4 schools that were not making sufficient

progress, and the merging of 25 others. That will ultimately be 12 remaining schools.

Also, I want to note that, under mayoral control, reform is possible in a way it wasn't before.

The PROS program is something we're particularly proud of, literally, saying that our teachers, at the school level, can vote to suspend their own union work rules.

This has never been done in New York City since we've had the unionized teachers.

Under the PROS plan, agreed to by the union, teachers vote to suspend their own union work rules, to suspend DOE work rules, and do things differently to help the kids in the way they think best.

Let me use a great example.

I bet Senator Lanza will know well, the Petriti School on Staten Island, and one of the prides of Staten Island.

I had the pleasure of being out there last May.

What's happening there?

Because of some of the changes under the PROS initiative that's now in 126 different schools in the city, students can take classes that, literally,

are modeled on college courses in every way.

Seminar-style classes, lecture halls; but, literally, acclimating kids to the college experience in a way that wasn't possible before.

Another example, Middle School 390 in The Bronx, the school schedule's been reworked.

Students now have an independent reading period at the beginning of each day, and a writing period at the end of each day.

That's the teachers deciding that's what's best for the students, and making the schedules work so that that's possible.

Again, something that could only happen on this kind of time frame, especially under mayoral control.

I mentioned your support for after-school.

I want you to know the investment you've made has made a huge difference.

We've had almost a doubling of the number of middle school kids in after-school because of your support.

110,000 middle school kids in New York City now getting free after-school, three hours a day, with tutoring and enrichment. They're safe after school. Their parents know where they are. They're

getting the support they need.

That's more than double the number when we came into office, because mayoral control allowed us to move quickly, and you provided the support.

We also believe that one of the things that makes mayoral control an effective system is maximum parental engagement.

I was a public school parent as recently as last June. I miss those days.

The Chancellor also looks at the world, not only as an educator, but as a parent and grandparent.

We believe in maximum engagement with parents, so we have taken mayoral control and added a number of elements, administratively.

We added 40 minutes every week for teachers to engage parents, and we made it a systemic thing; that we wanted to see regular and constant strategic engagement with parents.

The Chancellor constantly meets with representatives of parents.

We have a variety of methodologies that have been created at the school level, to engage parents and get their feedback, and change approaches, and engage them as partners.

But we're also particularly proud, we've added two parent-teacher conferences to the previous two. So now there's four a year, under our watch, much greater engagement.

And here's what's interesting: As we made these changes, we did a lot more outreach to parents.

We tried to figure out, what would make them more able to engage, and more effective engagement?

And what we've seen, the rate of attendance --

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Can we -- excuse me, Mayor.

Can we close the phones?

Just turn the cell phones off, please.

That includes the audience too.

We don't want them to interfere.

Please continue.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Thank you.

-- the rate of parent engagement at parent-teacher conferences in the last year has increased 38 percent.

This is really striking.

As we've created more parent-teacher conferences, made them more appealing, we have had

38 percent increase in parent involvement in the parent-teacher conferences.

We have, literally, had some schools where 100 percent of parents attended.

And, in terms of the community educational councils, which are one of the great vehicles for bringing parent input into decisions about schools in a district, we have increased, greatly, the number of parents who are volunteering to become CEC members; an increase of 75 percent over the last two years, now to the point that we have ample number of parents ready to be a part of CECs. And it's partly because we engage them so consistently.

So these are some of the things that have helped to make mayoral control more responsive.

I also have to note that, whenever we look at a situation in a school, any potential change in a school, we send out the highest-level officials to work with parents, literally, up to the deputy chancellor level.

When we look at a co-location, or any other potential change in a school, we send the deputy chancellor, work closely with the CEC, the Panel on Education Policy, et cetera, in making those decisions.

Now, I want to say that we're quite clear about the fact that parents depend on us.

Again, some of you know that I said in 2013, when I sought this office, to the best of anyone's historical memory, I was the first public school parent to become mayor while a public school parent.

So I brought a different kind of perspective and experience.

Parents entrust teachers and the entire school community with their children's future.

And one of the things we've said is, we're going to hold our teachers to a high standard.

We have a great working relationship with our teachers. We believe they're doing extraordinarily important work.

We're investing in them in professional development, but we hold a high standard.

And we want our vast majority of teachers who are committed, passionate educators, we want to help them do better all the time.

That's why the huge investment in professional development.

But we also know that there are some teachers who should not be in the profession, and I've been very open about that fact.

And I wanted to give you an updated number, that, from January 1, 2014, when I became mayor, until the end of this last March, we helped guide 1,361 teachers out of the New York City public schools; people who were not suited to the profession, and we helped find the right pathway out.

So we're supporting the overwhelming majority of teachers who are good, and in many cases, great, ready to be even greater. But we also know some people don't fit the profession, and we've found ways to address that.

So I'll conclude with just a couple of points of where we're going from now.

The vision that we're operating under for our schools is called "Equity in Excellence."

The notion of that vision is to lift up schools consistently across all communities, which was not done sufficiently in the past, and to hold a high standard of excellence.

I mentioned the 70 percent graduation rate, first time we've passed that in New York City history.

We have pledged to take that to over 80 percent in the next 10 years, and we're making

major investments and policy changes to achieve that.

We have pledged to increase the proportion of college-ready students to two-thirds of all of our students over the next 10 years.

We will have all of our -- and this is one of the most important pledges and most important commitments, and, Mr. Chairman, I know you will particularly appreciate this as a former teacher:

We believe, if our kids are reading at grade level by third grade, many other things are possible.

And if they're not, they are often added a weight onto their future. That is unfair to them.

We have pledged, in the next 10 years, to bring all children to third-grade reading level by third grade.

This is one of the most important initiatives the Chancellor is working on, greatly aided by the investment that's been made in pre-K as a strong foundation.

We've also been very clear that, in the next six years, every eighth-grader will have the opportunity to taken algebra.

In the next five years, every high school

will have AP classes. Every high school child will have an opportunity to take AP classes.

In the next two years, every middle school child will visit a college campus. Very important, from our point of view, to acclimate our young people to their possibilities of going to college.

Every middle school child in New York City will be brought to a New York City college campus, to be given that opportunity.

And one thing that's particularly powerful, and never been tried before in New York City, a program we call "Single Shepherd."

This is focused on some of our most underserved communities, including District 7 in The South Bronx, and, District 23, in central Brooklyn, including Brownsville, Ocean Hill, and parts of east New York.

Every single sixth-grade child through twelfth-grade child, all those grade levels, will be given a dedicated counselor, a "single shepherd," who is, in effect, a life coach, a counselor, a mentor, not just to work with them, but to work with their family members, to figure out what that child needs, each step along the way, to maximize their opportunity to get to college or choose another

great outcome after high school.

We've never had such a hands-on approach.

This will be the first time we've made it this specific to help kinds along the way, particularly in underserved districts.

Finally, one of the other key elements of Equity in Excellence: Computer Science For All.

We're integrating computer-science education throughout the curriculum, and over the next 10 years, we will have the more extensive computer-science education effort of any major school system in the country.

Many, many people in our city are excited about this.

Our technology sector, which is a huge part of our city's economy, particularly appreciates the fact this is going to create a whole generation of young people that can go into those great jobs, and we're excited about what it will allow us to do.

Finally, as I conclude, we -- as I said, the name of the program is "Equity in Excellence." This is the governing philosophy of the Department of Education, based on a speech I gave a year ago.

One of the things we know we have to address is the fair-student-funding formula.

And we appreciate again, deeply, the investments you made in education in the last budget.

We are taking $160 million from the funds that you made available.

We are raising the level of funding across all of our schools so that, now, the average of New York City public schools will be 91 percent of the fair-student-funding formula.

No school will be at less than 87 percent as we go into this year.

And all of our renewal and community schools will be at 100 percent of the standard.

Next year, if you continue on a similar path of aid again, which we appreciate, we will raise that commitment. We will get to an average of 92.5 percent for all schools across the system. A base of 90 percent. No school below 90 percent.

Our intention is to continue on that pattern, with your support, and by fiscal-year 2021, all schools will be funded at a minimum of 100 percent of the fair-student-funding formula.

So, I want to thank you for helping us to make that adjustment, which has been needed for a long time, and will have a big impact on our kids.

I conclude by saying:

I ask your consideration for an extension of mayoral control.

I believe everyone knows my broader philosophy on this matter, which I'm happy to discuss.

But, practically, I'd like to offer the notion of a seven-year extension, which is consistent with the original authorization of mayoral control in 2002.

I emphasize again, I believe this issue goes far beyond any normal questions of party or ideology because we've seen such tremendous support for mayoral support across the ideological spectrum.

And, again, when we see something that unites mayors of all different backgrounds, the business community, the labor community, it says something important is going on, something special.

And mayoral control is allowing us to do so much for our children.

So I ask your assistance, your support, your authorization, of our ability to continue this work.

I'm asking you to allow me to be held accountable by the people of New York City.

It's as simple as that.

The power of our democratic system means that I put forward a vision to the people, the people judge me by the results.

If the people don't like the results, they have a choice to hire someone else.

I think that's a powerful, clear line of accountability.

Mayoral control allows for that, and I ask your support for us to be able to continue our efforts.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

The line about the -- your comment about the people will decide, if they like what you're doing, they'll rehire you, I think we all understand that philosophy up here on the dais. It's something we do every two years.

Your comments and I was pleased to be at, be invited to, your address on education at the school in The Bronx, and it looked very good, I heard what you said. A lot of good initiatives, from my perspective. They were interesting.

I thought, some of them, I didn't -- frankly, didn't think you were going to be able to do.

But it's good to have high expectations and

high aspirations.

Quinnipiac recently did a poll that said 46 percent of the voters in the city of New York favored an extension of mayoral control, while 43 percent of the voters in New York City opposed it.

You've made a lot of outreaches and you've made a lot of speeches, I'm sure, and commented all over the place.

And Chancellor Fariña is certainly an excellent advocate on your behalf, and on the schools' behalf and on the children's behalf.

She does a job, and she does it very well, in my opinion.

But what do you say to those parents, those voters, those people, the 43 percent, who oppose an extension?

What do you say to them?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Well, look, first of all, I'd say we're working every day to show people that our schools can do better, that we're hearing the concerns.

A lot of the things, that when you were there at the speech, Mr. Chairman, emanated from concerns raised to us by parents all over the city.

So showing that a system that maybe wasn't always as responsive as it should have been, particularly before mayoral control was in place, is continuing to make changes.

And there's no doubt that parents are particularly appreciative of things like pre-K, after-school, AP For All, Computer Science For All.

We know, from talking to so many parents, how much those are the kinds of things they want their children to have.

But I would say we have a powerful proof point.

Mayor Bloomberg ran for office, seeking mayoral control. Was re-elected twice, supporting mayoral control.

I ran, supporting mayoral control.

Polls are polls.

We all -- all of us in this line of work understand they come, they go; they're inaccurate, they're accurate.

We're never sure. They're a point in time.

Elections are a formal decision by the people.

And now we've had four elections in a row in New York City that have ratified the notion of

mayoral control because the candidates running believed in mayoral control.

And, again, I think these results -- there's no question that people in New York City want to increase the graduation rate.

That's happened under mayoral control.

So I would argue, much more important than any polling, would be the facts on the ground, and the actions the people have taken in the electoral process.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: This year in our budget we gave New York City, the State added by $9 billion to New York City schools.

What's the City's contribution?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Let me get you the numbers, which I know someone is going to give me a sheet.

Hold on one second, Senator.

My apology.

Because we have been increasing, consistently, our investment in education at the same time.

If you'll pause, we're having a technical malfunction. Thought it was already up here, but I have to get it.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: That's all right.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: But as I pause, I will say, we've made clear --

That's the overall.

Thank you.

From able Sherif Soliman, it's come to 16.8 billion, Senator.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: That is City money, not City combined with federal?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: That is correct, total City funds.

And I'm going to queue Sherif to give me the sheet with the increase, please.

Thank you, Senator, for tolerating.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Not a problem.

While you're doing that, I'll introduce, we've been joined by Senator LaValle, Senator Murphy, and Senator Little, have joined us.

If I've missed anybody, please.

SENATOR LANZA: We've also been joined by Senator Jose Peralta, Senator Leroy Comrie, Senator Velmanette Montgomery, and Senator Bill Perkins.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: The high schools, I am told now, are allowed to set their own admissions

criteria.

This seems to have resulted in some schools having a lower enrollment of students that might fit poverty -- poverty criteria, and other schools having a higher enrollment.

How do you deal with that?

How are you dealing with that?

Because that would seem to be a problem that you would want to avoid.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: May I defer to the Chancellor?

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Sure.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Actually, it's not about setting their own criteria. They have to apply.

Our enrollment office is very heavily involved in what criteria high schools set up.

This year alone has been the highest percentage of special-needs kids being accepted to screened schools, students who we think will be successful in those schools, particularly if they are CTE programs.

There is an advantage for students to be in CTE programs, so we've made that equal across the board.

So no school can change their admissions procedures.

Most of -- many of the high schools are zoned, they're locally, particularly in Queens.

So anytime they want to make significant changes, it has to go through the Department of Education, and we're heavily monitoring the diversity.

But diversity is not only one dimension. It includes English-language learners.

Keep in mind, also, that some of our high schools are particularly set up for new immigrants.

Our International High School is specifically set up for new immigrants.

We have CTE programs, that if you're interested in plumbing, engineering, you have to have an interest in that.

So this is not a way to have select students in certain schools. It's all monitored through the DOE.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Mr. Chair, can I just take you back one step and add a few additional figures?

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Sure.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: So to put in context:

Since 2002, when mayoral control was established, the City's share of total education spending has increased by 12 percent.

Since we came into office, we've increased City spending by $3 billion. The State has increased spending by $1.8 billion.

At this point, our share of education spending in New York City is 57 percent. The State, roughly, 37 percent.

Before the recession, the average traditional state level of support for the City education budget was 42 percent.

So we're still not where we were at pre-recession.

But I want to assure you, we have continued to make major investments with City dollars.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: I'm going to move on, and I thank you for the comments.

I'm going to turn it over to my colleague Senator Latimer.

SENATOR LANZA: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

And, thank you, Chancellor Fariña. It's good

to see you again.

I have a couple of questions that have come out of other discussions, not necessarily personal questions, but that probe some of the structure that you deal with.

You've addressed it, I think, to some degree in your comments, but would appreciate your further discussion on it.

How do you assess the structure and the functioning, as it exists now, of the community education councils?

Do you favor any changes in the authority or the scopes for the CECs?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Well, I think the CECs, as I said, they're becoming stronger. We have more and more parents.

Because of our outreach efforts, our engagement of the CECs, more and more parents who want to participate.

I'll let the Chancellor speak to what she does directly with the CECs, which is outstanding, the direct engagement that she has.

But, look, what we said, for example, around issues I know parent care deeply about, and I certainly felt the same way as a public school

parent, on opening schools, closing schools, co-locations, we try to engage the CECs very consistently, and the school community of whatever school is affected.

I think we've been able to improve, bluntly, compared to a few years ago, the level of engagement, and the seriousness with which we take the concerns raised by the CEC and parents, and it often leads to a change in our plans.

And you can see that visibly in the fact that our PEP, our central board, has altered plans based on parental concerns, and even, sometimes, turned them down based on parental concerns.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Well, I think we've structured the CECs very differently.

First and foremost, we changed the time that I meet with them.

They used to meet for an hour once a month in the evening. We've made it three hours on Saturdays.

We responded to a request that they had to -- for them -- their presidents to be trained in leadership. And we hired an outside agency to come in and do leadership training for CEC presidents.

We've made them a focal point of school

walk-throughs for any co-location that is up on for discussion. They walk the building with deputy chancellors.

Depending on the issues that they have, we invite members of my staff, from the high school, CEC, to the CEC that deals with special needs, whatever guest speakers they want, we provide.

But I think a prime example of the ones that really work very, very well: I was at a town hall meeting last night in District 13, which is a CEC, and we've invested that CEC with really heavily deciding how they want to move towards diversity.

And they had requested -- we had projected, for example, an elementary school, a new one, in their district. And they requested that elementary school actually be a middle school instead, that they could have a hand in developing.

And we actually are doing that in the Atlantic Yards. The CEC put together a committee of themselves and other parents, to decide what that would look like.

So I think, this year, by the end of June, I will have done at least 100 town hall meetings, all done under the auspice of the CECs.

And the major difference is, when I go to

these meetings, the questions come from the floor, they come from the CEC, and they're answered on the spot.

Any question that doesn't get answered gets returned within 48 hours by a member of my staff.

So we have done a tremendous amount of work with the CECs, and we ask them for their agenda.

And I think that's really important.

We've also asked them, their help, on recommending enrollment strategies and enrollment procedures, particularly when it comes to under-enrolled schools.

So they are, really, a very important part of the work that we do.

SENATOR LANZA: And if I may, on this general topic, is there any need to coordinate the activities of the CECs and the schools themselves within each borough?

Do you favor any change that would involve a borough focus for those CECs that fall within a borough?

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Well, we have borough field services who now meet with local elected officials, as well as members of the CEC.

But in terms of a change for that

specifically, not really, because I think, in terms -- you know, all education is local. And, local, even within the same borough, is very different things.

I mean, I know Senator Golden's district. I certainly know Senator Hamilton's district. They're not the same.

So having certain decisions and certain discussions really -- and Staten Island is a world all by itself, in a good way.

So I do think the decisions that we make are local, and I think, actually, to a large degree, that is the way to do it.

I know I went to speak to the editorial board at the "Staten Island Advance," and one of the things I recommended, which they actually enjoyed the idea, is that, every week, they highlight a new school in Staten Island, one of our hidden gems.

They just did it this week for Fort Richmond.

And that's as local as I really think things have to be.

People believe in their local elected officials, they believe in that kind of decision-making, and I think that's really very important.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Senator, if I can just quickly add: No, we believe the current structure is the right structure, but that it had to be approached differently.

In other words, the bones of the situation were right, you know, the structural reality was sound, but it had to be approached in a way that was more connected to parents, more connected to the grassroots, more responsive.

And that is not only a matter of the CECs, which are crucial. It's also a matter of what we're doing with our superintendents.

Under this chancellor, the role of the superintendent has been reinvigorated.

Superintendents really have a powerful ability to stay connected to communities and make sure that community concerns are addressed.

That's something that had been atrophying for many years.

But it's another way we stay connected, not just to, you know, parents -- individual parents, but to community leaders, elected officials, to make sure that concerns are being responded to.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: And also let me add, that one of the things that we discovered, and

I'm sure it's citywide, but it was particularly true in The Bronx and in certain parts of Queens, once we started meeting with parents, we realized that there were an awful lot of grandparents coming to these meetings; and as a result, we actually started investigating how many grandparents were actually raising their children.

And in the city of New York, the percentage is quite high.

So we actually started, as part of our engagement, a grandparent advisory group.

And the grandparent advisory group is now actually coming forth with things they want, that are specially targeted just for them.

Some health issues for them, you know, how to talk to their children about their own mortality.

But, also, what are the latest books?

They haven't had children in their homes, maybe, in 20 years, so how do we do that?

So it's really learning on the ground what people want, rather than us mandating things for people to do.

What do they tell us they want more of, and then us providing that.

SENATOR LANZA: I have just one final

question, and then I'll turn my seat over to my colleagues who also want to be at the dais.

Currently, the city council has no direct, or limited role, in the structure and the implementation of the system.

Do you have any ideas for changes or adjustments that you think would give the council a greater or more appropriate role in the governance and/or the administration?

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Well, I want to speak as a -- Mr. Ranking Member, I want to speak as a former city council member for eight years, since I was a member of the education committee for eight years.

I think there's a substantial role right now, and one that we have encouraged and worked closely with.

So, again, I think the current structure of mayoral control is effective.

But I can tell you, and I've heard this from many council members, they recognized that the Chancellor and her team, and, again, all the way down to the superintendent level at local districts, realize they have to be responsive to concerns raised by council members about what's happening on the ground.

That was not always the case.

So we considered the oversight role that the council now has, and -- both the overall and locally, as important, and something we want to engage.

And, as usual -- everyone knows I was a legislator for many years, as I said.

A legislator is going to see something happen on the ground, alert us. Are we listening?

The answer is, yes, we are.

If they see a problem that needs to be addressed, we try, in a very focused fashion, go at it.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Yeah, again, I meet with the -- especially the Education Committee, and Chairman Drum, on a monthly basis, to discuss issues of them; and, also, bringing them up to date on any of the things, when I visit schools, that I think is something they should keep in mind, or issues that I am concerned about that I want them to think about.

So it's a constant back-and-forth in terms of the conversations that we have. There's a lot of open dialogue.

SENATOR LANZA: Thank you both very much.

Thank you, Mr. Senator -- Senator, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

Senator Golden.

SENATOR GOLDEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Mayor, for being here this morning, and the Chancellor, and, of course, your staff for the good work that they're doing.

I think the Chairman led up to an issue on transparency, and trying to figure out how you traverse the system: How much money comes into the system? How the money gets distributed within the system.

And you have to be a pretty good financial expert to try to figure that out.

It's very difficult on the websites to figure out how the money's coming in and the money is going out.

And I just want to move over, not to the operating dollars, but to the construction dollars, and SCA and the facilities.

How is that better today, or worse?

And how do you track that?

How does a simple person understand where the construction dollars are coming, how those

construction dollars are going out, versus the previous systems you had, versus today's system?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Well, the first thing I'd say is, one, we believe in transparency. We want to always work with you and your colleagues and all local communities to improve transparency in any way we can.

But the proof is in the pudding.

You know, the School Construction Authority, as you know, has really greatly improved its work over the last decade or more.

And the amount of output now, and the speed with which they're able to complete projects, it's just night and day from the past.

So the constant creation of new school facilities is the best evidence in the world. But, if there's ways that we can better show that trajectory, we're happy to do it.

We've continued to add resources into the School Construction Authority.

We have a very aggressive building plan to address overcrowding realities in many districts.

But I would say, you know, as with everything we do with our City budget, we try to regularly report to the people what the actual impact of the

dollars has been, and we want to find ways to make that as clear as possible.

SENATOR GOLDEN: Well, we do have -- obviously, I represent Brooklyn, and the Chancellor knows it well, District 20, 21, 22.

District 20, obviously, is severely overcrowded.

We put a tremendous amount of money in District 20, in building those schools and additions, and we're still the most overcrowded school district in the city.

What is the plan over the next ten years?

And how do we -- and especially with the changing communities, how do we deal with the overcrowded conditions?

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Well, I think one of the things that we've done much more carefully is we've asked superintendents to get involved.

Remember, in the past, you did not have one superintendent in charge of one geographical district.

So one of the first -- in fact, the first structural change that we made is to make sure there's one person in charge of the geographical district, where all the issues come to them.

Many of you, I hope, have already met with superintendents that you are now much more close to.

But I think, also, in District 20, there had been a particular issue that, where we had land -- and I think, also, Senator Montgomery probably is aware of some of this as well -- parents did not want to cross certain streets.

In your area, they don't want to cross Third Avenue; and, yet, some of the land is on the other side of Third Avenue.

So some of the discussions that we particularly are doing now with your CEC, is to talk about, how do we change people's minds about where good locations may be? And who would be the right students to go in that direction?

So I do think that's one of the conversations we're having, certainly, with Perrina (ph.), the superintendent.

And I just -- how do we do that with parents, and how soon can we get it done?

There are some particular situations that we're thinking about with district money.

SENATOR GOLDEN: If you can, I'd like to have a breakdown, if it's 20, 21, and 22, and we get an opportunity as to what your 10-year plan is for the

construction and the SCA, and how we're going to deal with the overcrowding, and the changing communities.

I think that's important for me, I guess it's important for all of my colleagues that are from the city of New York; but, specifically, in my community because of the overcrowding.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Senator, can I just jump in and give you another fact here?

SENATOR GOLDEN: Sure.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: We just -- as you know, we just announced our executive budget.

And, now, the current capital plan for the SCA is at 14.9 billion. That runs through fiscal 2019.

It is now pegged at 44,000 new seats.

Obviously, your district is going to be one of those focal-point areas.

And we, in the last budget that we just announced, added 11,800.

So that 44,000 includes an increased commitment of 11,800 seats over just the next few years.

Then we'll have another capital plan behind that, of course, that will keep going.

But I want to say, personally, as you know, I know your district well, and I served a neighboring district in the council.

And I know you're in a very popular part of the world, and we've seen explosion in the school community there.

We had great response on pre-K. We were able to constantly add capacity.

We're going to keep doing that.

So I just want you to hear my personal commitment, that we know the city has changed in many ways. The demand for school seats is different than what it was even 20 years ago.

We have to constantly make adjustments.

The good news is, as we saw with pre-K, we were able to, very rapidly, make those changes, in part, because we worked with religious schools, charter schools, community-based organizations.

We were able to do a lot with pre-K and with after-school, even outside of the traditional school buildings, but we know there's also a real need for additional, just traditional public school seats.

So I want you to know it's going to be an area of continued investment.

SENATOR GOLDEN: The areas -- thank you very

much.

The areas of concern, obviously, in communities like myself, and -- that I represent, and others, obviously, is how we're going to deal with the gifted-and-talented.

The classes seem to be reduced, not increased, and there seem to be more requests for them in my community.

There also seems to be -- how does that work into our STEM programs, and our STEM programs across the city?

How are we putting more emphasis on our STEM programs, and making it more -- more ability for -- or, more opportunities for the families and the children to be in these STEM schools?

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Well, the STEM programs, we developed a framework for STEM education.

We now have a program that starts STEM in kindergarten, all the way through twelfth grade.

We have put out training programs.

The week that teachers were off, we had 400 teachers who came to STEM training at the Stiverson High School. Many of them elementary schoolteachers.

STEM is not a separate subject. It's not to go to a classroom and you get STEM.

It's how do you infuse STEM into everything you do?

I know, in your district, they're having estuary day, I think Saturday, or two Saturdays from now, because, you know, I'm going to be there.

So how do you combine that with your science classroom, your arts classroom, with your English-language-arts classrooms?

So it's how do we train teachers to use STEM in every facet of their lives?

It's why you want a Maritime middle school. Right? Why you have a Harvest school.

So I think it's, really, how do you look at this from K, all the way to 12?

And how do you retrain teachers who maybe haven't really been exposed to any of this?

And, also, how do you use technology in a creative way so that all students have access no matter what neighborhood they live in.

But more importantly, I think the professional development that we've done for teachers.

Last year we had a one-day training session

on STEM. 1,000 teachers of showed up.

And this summer we plan on having two weeks of STEM training for teachers citywide: elementary, middle, and high school.

So, it's a big emphasis.

It's not a room in a school.

It's how do you get a school to change?

The Brooklyn Navy Yard, for example, is one of the places that's going to be one of our STEM hubs.

And we have five high schools that are heavily involved in that.

But we expect all the middle schools to be connected to that, and then the elementary schools to be connected to middle schools.

So it's a very big effort, and it's going to be comprehensive.

SENATOR GOLDEN: Staying on that course, if we're going to do the school construction and we're going to build new schools, hopefully, a number of them will be STEM schools going into our communities, so our children across the city have opportunities, especially in districts where they are severely overcrowded. They need a balanced system.

So I would hope that we would do that.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Can I just add --

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Absolutely.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: -- absolutely, and say this --

SENATOR GOLDEN: And the AP courses, obviously, lead up to that, (indiscernible) they have the STEM courses. It's easier, obviously, for the children to get through the AP courses as well, when they get to the high school.

But go ahead, sir.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: No, Senator, you're totally on the right target.

The first Computer Science For All, which, again, we're doing very -- working very closely with the technology sector in the city, that's going to pervade the entire curriculum of the school system.

But, second, we are going to be investing a lot more in career and technical education, because we believe, even though we want every child to have the opportunity and the chance to go to college if that's right for them, first of all, a lot of kids to go a career and technical education program and go to college. Some kids go to a career and technical education program and go right into a

career.

And, interestingly, technology is one of the great examples.

With just a two-year associate's degree in a STEM subject, you can, in many cases, go into a good job in our technology sector.

And we've been supporting CUNY's efforts to expand those initiatives.

But my point would be, as we expand career and technical education programs, and career and technical education high schools -- standalone programs, stand-alone high schools -- more and more of those are going to be in the kinds of areas where the economy is going. It's, obviously, technology, it's life sciences, it's health care, it's film and TV.

There's a whole host of areas that we can see our economy strengthening in the city, so you're going do see more of those, like P-TECH; you're going to see more of those stand-alone, STEM-oriented high schools and STEM-oriented programs, because there's a huge demand, and they're also the best way to get our young people to good jobs.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: And I will also

say that one of the best partners that we've had in this work is actually one of the Brooklyn institutions, Kingsborough Community College, and they are partnering now with a tremendous amount of our middle schools and high schools.

And, also, when you want to attract parents to certain high schools, and I'll use an example, John Dewey, which was under-enrolled for many years.

And, now, because of their CTE programs, they're starting a STEM program. They already have a culinary program.

We're trying to bring more programs to them.

They are seeing a real increase in their enrollment.

So I think this is all the wave of the future.

People -- and, also, gives students options.

You know, you either -- you go to high school to go to college?

No. You go to high school to get a really good education, so then you have choices.

And your choice is: You can go to college, and then get a job. Or, you can go, you know, and join a union, which gets you a good-paying job.

But, students should have options.

And this is part of what the work we're trying to do, particularly with CTE.

SENATOR GOLDEN: I want to thank you on the -- I'm going to move to the another area, real quickly, is homeless -- the homeless families.

And we've seen, in my community, moved a group of homeless families in from The Bronx.

When you move families into a community, you also impact those school districts; and, therefore, you are denying the kids that live in the community the ability to get into the school, and you're really upsetting the family structure if you're moving them too far out of what their school system is.

So I want to thank you for doing that.

You worked with our community to make sure that we get those kids back to -- closer to their school districts and back to their school districts.

Do you have a plan to do that in the future --

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Yes.

SENATOR GOLDEN: -- to make sure we're not impacting schools that we're at -- we're moving families into, but making sure we keep those kids closer do their school district?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Exactly right.

And thank you for your focus on this, Senator, and for working with us.

The biggest element of the plan is to reduce homelessness.

SENATOR GOLDEN: That, for me -- and you're on your way to doing that. You're doing that.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: And we feel proud of the fact that we've stabilized the situation, but we want to go farther, but to prevent it before it happens.

But then, you're right, when we have folks who, God forbid, end up in a shelter, let's do the logical thing, and at least make that shelter as close to the home community as possible.

That's not how the system was oriented for years. We're retooling it in that direction rapidly.

But the other thing we're recognizing is, while there are kids who, you know, very sadly, are a distance from their home school district, it's our obligation to provide them direct transportation.

So we started, in fact, a specific school bus service to get those young people to their schools so they didn't have huge commutes on public

transportation.

But, further, we just added to this executive budget, just in the last two weeks, over $10 million for direct tutoring efforts and attendance-oriented efforts in the shelters.

So we understand, if a child has gone through that kind of dislocation, that the odds start to go up that their attendance might get questionable or their academic achievement might suffer.

So we're, literary, going to put attendance specialists and tutors in the shelters, in the after-school and the evening hours, to work with kids, to make sure they go to school, to make sure they're doing their homework; very hands-on-focused.

The goal, ultimately, to have fewer and fewer young people in shelter.

But one last thing, Senator:

As you have seen, what we used to think of as homelessness has changed profoundly, as the cost of housing has gone up, as there have been so many economic challenges.

Now, more and more people in shelter are members of families, even working members of the families, and young people go to school.

So as the shelter reality has changed, we

need to apply more resources to get right in there with them and help keep those kids consistent in their education, looking to the day when we can get them back into a stable home.

SENATOR GOLDEN: Last question, because I know my colleagues want to ask more questions, and I apologize for taking so long.

The pre-K's, we can't really track out how much money has been spent in the pre-K, where the money's coming from on the construction dollars, how we're moving these pre-K's along, and what is it doing to co-locations with our charter schools?

How does that play into this as well?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: My broad answer is, we can -- again, we're happy to go over any figures with you about how we've spent resources, specifically on pre-K.

It's been, as you can see, very successful.

But, I don't think there's been a lot of interaction with the co-location issues because, what happened, essentially, is we had schools with pre-K classrooms.

In some of the traditional public schools, there was, maybe, one more classroom, or two more classrooms, we could get available with some

creative work, but nothing that fundamentally changed the reality of the school because it's only one grade level.

What we had to do, in many cases, as you know, is work with a charter school, a parochial school, a community-based organization.

So I don't think there's been much interaction with the co-location issue.

What I can say is that, the resources that have been spent have been spent very efficiently, because we were able to reach those parents and locations that work for them.

So, you know, people voted with their feet.

The fact that we got almost up to 70,000 kids now meant that the locations worked.

It was a free marketplace, if you will, and people -- parents chose ones that work for them.

Almost 70,000 kids now in those programs, and the parent-satisfaction levels are very high, based on the independent surveys we've done.

But we're happy to lay out to you exactly how we use the resources to get those different pieces put together.

SENATOR GOLDEN: And the co-locations are working fine?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Co-locations, in general -- if the question is co-locations in general, I would say this is always an area of sensitivity.

But what I feel is much better over the last couple of years -- and I will give the Chancellor and deputy chancellors a lot of credit -- is, you know, you heard the complaints, I heard the complaints, about people getting an announcement that their school is going to change, without any warning or real discussion.

Now, before any decisions are made, literally, up to the level of a deputy chancellor arrives at the building, meets with the parents, walks through the building, to talk about what changes might happen.

There's an extensive process, with the CECs involved, the PEP.

And as I said, in some cases, CEC objections and parent concerns have led the PEP to change the outcome, which was not something you saw previously, and to improve the plan.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: All right, let me just say, there are several things about co-locations that were really changed.

And, actually, Senator Comrie, you're living through one of these now.

Let me be very clear:

There have been several things that have been changed, going in this administration, than prior.

And one of the most important ones, is there's a lot more discussion before this has happened. It doesn't happen in the middle of the night, it doesn't happen all of a sudden.

I think the other thing that I think is extremely important is that, whatever is done to -- in the charter school, if that's the co-location, has to be -- the same amount of money has to be spent in the other schools.

So, all of a sudden, you have a science lab going up in a school that's been dying for a science lab forever, and you have upgrades in their bathrooms, because, if it's done here, it has to be done here.

The other thing we did, starting last year, we put out a grant proposal, that if a charter school and a public school, together, would write a grant on how they would share some kind of resources, that we would give them this extra money.

So, for example:

We have grants that came in to do buddy classes with the middle schools and elementary schools.

We had grants to run after-school programs.

We're trying to make co-locations, and this includes stand-alone high schools.

We have high schools with six high schools in them.

We said, what do you need, together, that we might help you fund, that alone you cannot do?

So we're really looking at all kinds of co-locations, and say, how do we make it better for everybody?

But it's takes a lot of work.

Some work better than others.

But this is an ongoing challenge, and I think it's one, though, that we've done a really good job on in the last year, in bringing people to the table beforehand.

Now, if there's going to be a principal of the new school, we bring them to the table to meet the principal of the existing school, and, what do you guys want to do together?

We certainly did that in --

SENATOR GOLDEN: What we're hearing is,

there's less co-locations, and we're having -- hearing that it's more difficult for co-locations.

And if you can give that to us, a list of the co-locations today, and what happened last year, and the year before that.

I have to leave. I have a another number of events today, so I'll be in and out of room.

But I want to thank you for your testimony.

And if you can get those numbers to us, we would appreciate it.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Absolutely.

Thank you, Senator.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you, Senator.

Senator Hamilton.

SENATOR HAMILTON: Good morning, Mayor de Blasio, and Chancellor Fariña.

Congratulations on 50 years of service to our children in education.

Education is very important to me. That's why I ran for the community school board in District 17.

At that time, we had the fifth-best school in New York State, the Crown School for Law and Journalism.

As time moves on, I'm the Senator from

Brownsville. I represent Sunset Park, Gowanus, Park Slope, Prospect Heights, Crown Heights, and beautiful Brownsville; so, I cover a diverse area.

But -- and I've been working with the CSA, the UFT. They've been doing a phenomenal job in educating our kids.

But one school in particular, and many schools, but one I will point out to you, the Brooklyn New School, a very prominent school.

Principal Alan -- Anna Allanbrook is concerned that the new policies with the DOE, she has to tell kids from Crown Heights and Bed-Stuy they could not attend her school anymore, due to the policies that are being put forth by the DOE.

But, kids from Williamsburg, in the more affluent areas, can.

So as we see gentrification happening in our schools, the policies are sometimes having an adverse effect on the kids that are the best and brightest, coming from minority neighborhoods, really having no options, moving forward.

So, I just wanted to put that out there.

I'm also the Ranker for the Mental Health Committee. And what we noticed, I have an advisory committee, is that teachers don't know how to take a

class in mental health, to identify -- we know, at a young age, young children exhibit maybe a -- mental disabilities, that if they're addressed at an early age, they can be helped, and rather than -- moving forward.

So myself and Assemblyman Crespo have introduced a mental-health bill, which is S.6234, which will require teachers to identify behavioral issues versus mental issues, so that a child that is not continually suspended because the underlying mental issue is not addressed.

Myself, when my parents were divorced, I started acting out and fighting. But no one took the time to say, what's going on in your life?

I think we need more of that holistic approach.

Also, being in Brownsville, you know, statistically, the school resource have gone down under mayoral control.

PS 284, from 22 percent, under 6 percent.

PS 218, from 18.9 percent, to under 6 percent.

PS 73, from 18 percent, to under 5 percent.

So what we're seeing in Brownsville is a reduction in reading scores.

I'm not sure, is that because of the increase in the homeless shelters?

But seeing those scores, we start at the campus in Brownsville, and the campus is 42 community-based organizations, working with 3 schools, to have technology and wellness centers, with the Brooklyn public libraries.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Senator, would you be kind enough, because you're raising a number issues, can we just pause for a moment and address those, and then we'll continue to answer anything else you have?

On the point about -- the last point --

And I want to work backward a little bit, quickly, because I know the Chancellor wants to offer her thoughts.

-- there is no question, as I said, that we are dealing with a challenge in many communities of homelessness by families that did not used to exist.

So you're absolutely right, this is an X factor in the equation.

Almost 40,000 of the 58,000 people in shelter right now in New York City are family members: parents and children in families.

That is putting a stress on particular

districts, in particular. That's why we're trying to add resources and approaches to address that.

Now -- but I would not agree with the idea that because some schools might have had some problems, that that suggests that, overall, the strategies that we're putting in place aren't working, because I think the overwhelming evidence is that, there's movement forward in the school system.

SENATOR HAMILTON: Oh, no, you're doing a great job, but we can always just fine-tune it a little bit.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: There's no question, we have a lot to do.

And I want to note, that's why I raised the Single Shepherd initiative, for example, which Brownsville would be one of the leading-edge areas for.

This is trying to change the rules of the game entirely, to say, that a family and a young person will have support -- direct, consistent support. The same exact individual will be with them, from sixth grade, all the way to twelfth grade, to help deal with any of the issues that come up, keep that child in the right place on

their path forward.

So we're making a number of investments.

As I mentioned, the investments in the shelters.

There's no question, when I talk about Equity in Excellence, that is a living, breathing idea, that when you, or anyone else, identifies an area where we're not seeing sufficient equity, we need to go right at that.

That's why we're working to change the numbers on the fair-student-funding formula, et cetera.

But I would say, the broad strokes on graduation rate, on test scores --

Although, as you know, I believe in multiple measures. Test scores are only one indication.

-- but we have so many pieces of evidence that something is moving across all communities.

The right basic plan, a lot more to do, and a lot more fine-tuning, as you say.

On mental health, I want to, first of all, thank you for your focus on it.

SENATOR HAMILTON: I want to thank your wife also.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Well, that's where

I was going to go.

I thank my wife every day.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: That's a very wise position.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Mr. Chairman, thank you, you're right.

I came to that realization early in marriage, sir.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: So did I.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: So we -- I was going to say, I also know that our anniversary is May 14th, and it's 22 years.

So I want you just to know, I'm prepared.

We -- when we looked at the mental-health challenges of the city, Chirlane rightfully decided we needed to, literally, create a system.

We have, you know, a health-care system, but that means physical health.

We do not have a mental-health system.

The audacity of what she's doing, and I have immense respect for it, is she is saying, with her ThriveNYC plan, that we're going to create, from scratch, effectively, we're going to pull together a bunch pieces that exist but are not a system, and create a system, and give it the resources it needs.

But the schools are a crucial piece of this.

The 130 community schools, for example, all have mental health as one of the components that we're going to be adding into them.

We believe that mental-health services need to be available early, to maximize, exactly as you said, catching the difference between something that may be a temporary challenge and something that's a more profound challenge that needs to be addressed.

And that's one of many things we will do on mental health at the school level.

So I just wanted you -- I appreciate your focus, and we want to work with you and Assemblyman Crespo, but we think you're exactly on the right track here.

We think we have to focus on mental health in the school system if we're going to, both, help children learn, but, also, God forbid, the tragedies we see that happen in adulthood.

In so many cases, how many people in Rikers Island, how many people are homeless, how many people are unemployed, because their mental-health needs were not addressed early?

So that's core to what we want to do.

Finally, and I'll pass to the Chancellor, on

the question of the Brooklyn New School, or any other school, again, our equity imperative is, we do not want to see any formula that advantages one group over another, particularly folks who are privileged over folks who are less privileged.

A lot of exciting things are happening in the school system now to bring all different kinds of kids into the same school.

A lot of new approaches are being innovated under Chancellor Fariña.

But if there is something, and she knows Brooklyn New School quite well for years, if there's something there that has happened, that's causing an inadvertent outcome, we, obviously, want to work on that.

SENATOR HAMILTON: I just want to -- I also want to thank your wife, the First Lady.

I met with her a year and a half ago, and she had this initiative for ThriveNYC and for mental health.

She actually came to our district last week.

And so I thank her for being in the forefront and putting it out there.

So part of the campus, and part of the mental-health bill, was your wife taking the

initiative and bringing to it forefront.

So I want to thank her for that.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Thank you, I'll tell her that. I appreciate that, Senator.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: I think, first of all, with the specificity of the Brooklyn New School, it's one of our PROS schools. So Anna has a lot of leeway in how they do the lottery, because it's is a lottery school; it's not a zone school.

And she was one of the beginning people to do a PROS initiative.

And we actually put out this year, that other schools who want to replicate her PROS initiative in diversity are free to do so.

And so she is one of the guiding lights on that issue.

I want to be clear that, you know, we keep putting more and more on the teachers' plate, and asking teachers to take more courses on more things.

And one of the things that I think we really need to stress is that this training has to be part of the teacher-education college experience.

If you're going to train to be a teacher, that you need to have a certain amount of courses and credits.

And we're working with the CUNY system to see how they can infuse some of this as part of their teacher training, so that we don't have to play catch-up when they first go into our schools.

The other commitment is, and we started last year, and it continues this year, to increase the number of guidance counselors, not to work just with families and children, but to work with teachers.

As a principal, I know one of the first things I did, is have my guidance counselors meet on a weekly basis with all my first-year teachers, because they're falling apart. They're just babies themselves; they need to have their hands held. They need to be trained, that what do you do with a child who cries in a classroom? Or, a child comes to school who you think may have been abused, and how do you handle that correctly?

So there needs to be a lot of training.

And I think added to that, and going back specific to the districts that you talked about, we can't measure reading scores as a whole school.

You have to measure progress, child by child, because what's happening in a lot of our schools now, a parent will move from this school to this school.

So it's the child's progress that we have to measure, not the school's.

One of the schools in District 23, Jonathan Dill's school, is doing unbelievable work. But every year he loses a certain number of kids because either parents move or other issues; and, yet, you have one of the most outstanding schools.

Nadia Lopez's school there, who just was the "Nobel Prize" winner of education.

So what we need to do, and this is something, you know, District 13 asked me last night, too, we need to start re-branding our schools.

All of you need to go out there and talk about the great stuff that's happening in your local schools, because if a school had a reputation five years ago, it still has the same reputation now, when it's not necessarily the same school.

So we need to do a lot more work about highlighting public education.

I mean, one of the things we're doing with Mayor Levin, we're going to send some of the people to go see what's happening in some of the schools, like a Mark Twain.

How do you replicate the good stuff, but how do we celebrate the stuff that's working that nobody

knows about.

SENATOR HAMILTON: Yes, Chancellor.

And I just wanted to finish up on, with the campus, we're focusing on technology and wellness.

And what we're noticing in our community renewal schools, we have the computer labs, but no one to teach coding. And we know that coding and technology is the way to go in the future.

And so I just look forward to working with the Department of Education.

But then the second part of that, I have some schools where 23 percent of the kids come from homeless shelters, but there's only $100 per child of additional funding.

So maybe -- so we -- the question is: How do we -- we -- guidance counselors are great, but we need social workers and psychologists in those schools, because coming out of a shelter, you can have depression, anxiety, so many different mental illnesses; just the traumatic effect of being homeless.

So I just wanted to find out if we're going to put a mental-health percentage for children coming from shelters, children whose parents are incarcerated, we -- children who are chronically

absent, so we know the catchment the area, the pool of students who are at risk.

And I just think we should be putting more resources at that risk population, overall, to make it happen.

And, as we know right now, Brownsville has a lot of children who go to school, who wind up incarcerated. And we know now, that Rikers Island has more people with mental disabilities than any other mental-health facility in the state.

So we have people who need mental help in a debilitating environment, not getting the help they need. And it actually stems from the classroom -- I'm not saying from the classroom, but identifying these kids at an early age.

And so that's why I'm really pro on mental health, I'm really pro on ThriveNYC, to change the system, in that we get these kids help at an early age.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Well, I just need to say three things, quickly.

In this budget, there is -- depending on the number of homeless students, there's an uptick in schools' budgets to be able to deal with that issue in a different way.

That's number one.

Number two, when it comes to Rikers, after my second visit there, we embarked on creating a committee to make major changes.

So, for example, a year go, on Rikers, and I'm talking about the teenage center, more or less, the middle school and the high school part, the students were only in school three hours a day.

Well, what do you do the rest of the time?

So we increased the time for those students to five hours a day.

We created a professional development plan for all the teachers.

We now have what we call a "master principal" in that site.

We actually purchased books, and I do that on a personal level, because I've gone to visit a school where all the books were on social-justice issues and the kids couldn't read them fast enough.

So we purchased books, specifically, so they would want to read them, and take them back to their cells and read them there, because they weren't allowed to carry books from one place to the other.

So we worked with Commissioner Ponte, we developed a whole new system, and, I'm very proud.

We could do a lot more, and we need to do a lot more.

The other thing I'll say, that the pre-K initiative -- and, again, thanks to the First Lady -- is also focusing on parenting skills.

Once a month we have parents come to pre-K centers, and also to community centers, to learn how to read to your child, how to work to -- how to talk to your child, because in a lot of communities, there's a sense of hopelessness that, really, people then don't do the next step.

So how do you have parents' support groups for each, is something we're working on.

But, once again, I do think that, in terms of how we encourage parents, we're encouraging "Mommy and Me" classes in some of the schools, in some of the neighborhoods where there's space. 3-year-olds, come with your child; learn how to read to your child.

We're doing that in Red Hook, at PS 15, "Mommy and Me" classes.

So there's a lot of things we're trying to do, but I think the most importantly thing, and I certainly (indiscernible), is saying the words out loud, because this was something nobody talked

about.

They had all kinds of euphemisms.

You know, he doesn't act right; or, he's a little strange; or, you know, his grandfather had this.

And now we're able to say out loud, this is what it's called, and this is what you need to do about it.

We're working with a lot of hospitals.

A lot of hospitals have come forth to help us with this.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: So just to finish, real quick:

Key point: Yes, literally, the pre-K teachers are being trained in how to identify the problems and start to get the help.

And what we're trying to create is, any principal, any teacher, knows where to turn when they identify a child with a need, that it can be that seamless.

But I remind you, again, you know, we put -- so we put, as I mentioned, the $10 million directly into -- you mentioned the homeless kids -- directly into the tutors and attendance support, in the shelter.

We're putting social workers in 43 schools that have a high shelter population. So we're adding, additional, 33 new social workers to work with kids, again, to try and identify those problems that come out of homelessness.

And, the overall investment we're making in mental health throughout the school system.

So, look -- and your point about Rikers is well-taken.

Much more mental-health-oriented programming going on there than ever before.

But what we're trying to do, and I know you believe in this, is actually identify the mental-health issues that lead people into the criminal justice system, and stop them from ending up in the criminal justice system to begin with.

This is going to be work of years, but I can safely say, already we're starting to see some impact of being able to keep people out of the criminal justice system, because they're getting the mental-health care they need.

And, certainly, on Rikers, because we have to worry about recidivism, getting people actual rehabilitation that can only happen if they're getting proper mental-health services.

SENATOR HAMILTON: Thank you, Mayor; thank you, Chancellor.

I look forward to working with you.

You're doing a great job.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

I just want to remind everybody that we have a long list of speakers, and a long list of questioners who would like to talk to the Mayor.

So if we can focus and laser on mayoral control of the schools, I think that would be very helpful.

And, to that end, Senator LaValle.

SENATOR LaVALLE: Nice to meet you.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Good to meet you, Senator.

SENATOR LaVALLE: I attended kindergarten at PS 29, so I know that's --

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: In Brooklyn.

SENATOR LaVALLE: In Brooklyn.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: That's my district, and her original school where she taught.

You turned out good.

SENATOR LaVALLE: But it was because of the education I got after.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Ooh, ooh, ooh, ooh, ooh.

SENATOR LaVALLE: No, in all fairness, I didn't know my colors, except, they didn't realize I was color-blind. So my parents moved me to St. Peter's, that is no longer there, but --

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: You lived in my -- that's where I live.

SENATOR LaVALLE: I lived on Henry Street.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Oh, so did I. Okay.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Do you guys want to get together for lunch?

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Absolutely.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: He's bringing people together.

SENATOR LaVALLE: We're here to talk about mayoral control.

And, how often do you meet with the Chancellor?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Average is, every week, but we talk in between a number of times. And there's also special meetings that come up.

Typically, once a week.

SENATOR LaVALLE: So the last time you met, do you remember what the agenda was?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Multi-faceted agenda.

We talked, obviously, about a lot of the issues that would come up here.

We constantly are talking about special education.

We're talking about the role of mental health in schools.

We're talking about our efforts to increase teacher training, and, also, deal with some people who shouldn't be in the profession.

Those are amongst many, many other topics I could raise, but those are regular topics.

SENATOR LaVALLE: Just, offhand, how much of your time do you spend on education issues?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: It's a big piece of the time and energy I put in, because it is central to the budgeting process, which is a lot of my time; central to the process around the state of the city, which is our vision for the city each year.

The regular meetings with the Chancellor.

I visit a number of schools, obviously, including our pre-K effort.

When pre-K was being constructed, it was something separate from whatever I did with the Chancellor, I would have several meetings a week on construction of the pre-K initiative.

I did a lot of separate time on the construction of the after-school initiative.

So, I can try and come up with an exact figure for you, but it's a very central part of the work I do.

SENATOR LaVALLE: Okay. And how do things come into your office?

You were a former city council member, so I'm sure your colleagues feel, instead of calling the Chancellor up, they call the Mayor up.

And I see you have a smile on your face.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I have a smile because, yes, my former colleagues feel a great deal of comfort telling me what's on their mind.

But they also -- I can say this objectively, because I've heard from members, Democratic and Republican in every borough, they have a lot of comfort in their relationship with the Chancellor. So there's a huge amount of connection she has directly to them.

It's not so typical that a council member would come to me on a special school issue locally.

It's usually the -- you know, the bigger, substantive issues.

But, you know, having been a public school

parent, having been a community school-board member, I still am in touch with a lot of parents who give me their feedback, a lot of people I see just walking down the street, or I know from my neighborhood and from other parts of the city.

So I think the fact is, I don't get into the minutia, but I do think I have a substantial feedback loop to hear what's working and what's not.

SENATOR LaVALLE: So as I was just coming into the hearing, discussion was had on numbers: How much State aid you get, how much you spend, and, et cetera.

And the City is in a very excellent position, since it could use general resources, and we've talked about that with mental health, and you have really had a good focus on that.

Lunch; making sure that children have lunch.

I assume that children at home are not being abused, that the special-ed process is working properly, et cetera.

So, can you talk about some of the other resources -- government resources that are used to deal with the totality of the student?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Yeah, I think I'm going to try to answer properly, and tell me if I'm

hitting the right mark here.

We do try to think, as a government, across all the different departments and agencies.

So, for example, when we put together pre-K, the only way pre-k could be put together --

And I thanked your colleagues, and I want to thank you as well, for the support for the pre-K initiative.

-- because it is -- as you know, it is being noted all over the country, the biggest city in the country was able to do this in two years: get up to full-day pre-K for almost 70,000 kids.

Well, that was because the fire department helped us do it. The Health Department helped us do it. The Buildings Department helped us to do it.

They all had to play a key role in making sure the health and safety and the right dynamics were there.

Obviously, the Department of Education, other agencies as well.

So, we do try and put a focus on education that says, you know, any agency that has a role to play in helping us get something done in terms of our kids, we work together.

We did that with the after-school initiative,

which is Department of Education, the Department of Youth and Community Development, many non-profit partners, as I said earlier.

Religious schools have been our partners, charter schools have been our partners, in getting things done, like pre-K and after-school.

So we do try and come up with, you know, if you will, a coalition effort to get these things done.

To your -- to the way that you prefaced the question, I would say we have a lot more work to do.

I'm not here to suggest everything is perfect in New York City. We've got a lot more work to do.

But I do feel good that the entire city government understands that education -- I think I can safely say, when I put myself forward for this office, I said pre-K was my number-one initiative. Education is the issue I focus on the most.

And I think that has permeated our administration in a favorable way, in the sense that agencies know that if they have a role to play, it is a high priority.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: I just want to add that there's another thing that I think is really helping us.

We have become a center that other people want to learn from.

So we just hosted 140 superintendents from around the country, which makes us very -- a very good city to apply for grants.

So we're applying for grants on issues that we want money to come from the outside so we don't have to use our own resources.

So we've got a major grant to do leadership training.

We work closely with the -- with both our unions, CSEA and UFT, in ways that allows us to leverage more money.

So they're helping us, for example, on the renewal work.

So I think that it's not just about our budget, but, how do we combine monies, and how do we also say, we in New York City are ahead on the community schools, on the renewal schools?

So we take visits.

We just had visitors from Yonkers, from Rochester.

How do we use the city as an example of what is being attempted, so other people will want to do it, so then we can apply for grants and say, because

we're being used as a model, we should have more money?

SENATOR LaVALLE: Right.

A lot of good stuff goes on in the city.

The only -- not the only thing -- but, a good part of the time, it's the failing schools that hit the newspapers with great repetition.

So, this goes to mayoral control:

What are we doing to really deal -- and no one has mentioned, maybe Chairman did, but, I haven't heard: What are we doing about reducing the number of schools that are failing that allow a lot of our students to fail?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Well, I'm very focused on this, as is the Chancellor.

So, we have 94 schools that we put in that category. We call them "renewal schools."

We are doing everything that we know to do to get them to be strong again.

In many cases, new leadership. I think 33 new principals.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: 33 new principals in the 94 schools.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Bringing in, in many cases, a master teacher, a model teacher, teachers

who are exemplary, to help bring up the whole effort.

More professional development.

We've seen an improvement in attendance.

We've seen, in many cases, a real improvement in the school culture in the capacity of the school.

Now, that being said, I put forward this vision a year ago.

I said we were working on a three-year timeline. That they had up to three years to prove that these investments and the changes in leadership, et cetera, were making an impact.

But I reserved the right, with the Chancellor, to make changes more quickly.

So, in the case of four schools that were on that list, we have moved foreclosure already. We've initiated the closure process.

In the case of 25 schools, we've initiated a merger process.

Many of them had become very small over time.

A little bit of a chicken-egg dynamic.

You know, the previous administration, obviously, really amplified this small-school approach, but, sadly, in the case of the small school that then was struggling, parents voted with

their feet, and so the attendance -- or the -- I'm sorry, the level of the student body got so small that they really couldn't be functional.

This is something that the Chancellor focused on: the need to merge some of these schools as part of fixing them.

So we've started aggressively on that route.

But I think the good news in this is, that we see a number of these schools starting to improve meaningfully, to keep to that timeline we set out.

When we get to that three-year mark, the ones that have continued to improve, we're going to raise the standards again on them.

It's not -- we're not satisfied with just getting somewhat better. We're going to keep picking that pace up.

For the ones that don't make it, we're going to closure, and we've been very clear about that.

SENATOR LaVALLE: Well, are these in poor areas?

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: The vast majority are. Poverty does make a difference.

But I think more important, and I want to be very clear --

SENATOR LaVALLE: Could you give me a number

out of the 94?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: The number of the 94 that are in poor areas?

SENATOR LaVALLE: Yes.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Well, I think we should -- we will give you an exact number.

The caution I want to make is, there are some schools that may not be physically in an area that is considered poor, but a lot of the students happen to be.

So we'll get you the exact number.

But I think, as you said -- as the Chancellor said, it is primarily in lower-income neighborhoods, yes.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: I think we have -- really, also need to change the dialogue on this, because when you say "failing schools," you're assuming failing students.

And they're struggling. And in many of the cases in these schools, they were neglected for too long.

They sometimes did not have any professional development. They may not have had leaders who had high expectations.

So we're not just changing what we do in

these schools, but how we think about what we do in these schools.

All these schools have what we call the "DSR"; a person that is designated to work with all the teachers in the building to handle their professional development.

So there's a lot of work going on in these schools.

The Commissioner was just in two or three of our schools yesterday, and the day before, and she's very impressed by the steps that we're taking.

SENATOR LaVALLE: Okay. I'll be in touch with you, Chancellor, to question that out a little more.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Yeah, and I'm happy to take any of you to visit any of our renewal schools, particularly if they're in your particular communities.

I do school visits all the time.

SENATOR LaVALLE: Mayor, I was very, very happy to hear you talk about career and technical education.

I have been trying to begin a process, beginning in seventh grade.

In the budget, I didn't achieve that goal.

It went to eighth grade.

But we're trying to create a career track for students, because you were right on the money with what you said. With the community-college education, they can end up with something very special and earn a good income.

I'm going to ask for your help with the Assembly, to flesh out greater details, so that you can see your goal achieved in what you want to do, and stuff.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Senator, thank you for that.

And I think -- I appreciate how focused you are.

As you know, for too many years in this country, somehow, career and technical education got treated like something lesser and became shunned; when, in fact, for a lot of young people, it's exactly what's right for them.

And as I said earlier, it doesn't mean they don't go to college also, but, for some, it's a fantastic path. Two-year degree, and right into the tech community.

I'd love to work with you, to see how we can do more.

But, we're planning 40 new schools and programs in career and technical education.

We think there's a lot more we can do in that vein, but it has to be up-to-date.

This is what we found, when I was public advocate.

We did a study on this and found, unfortunately, a lot of the career and education was teaching skills that weren't part of today's job market.

We want to bring them up-to-date and make them much more of a focus.

And thank you for your help.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

Senator Felder.

SENATOR FELDER: Good morning.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Good morning.

SENATOR FELDER: The Chancellor mentioned about the increase in psychologists in the schools.

What is the student-to-psychologist ratio, or vice versa?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: We have to get you that.

SENATOR FELDER: Well, I think we've talked about it a number of times, and I know you have

these two schools where you're doing some other program where they're following students.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Yes, Single Shepherd.

SENATOR FELDER: Which is great, but, I think addressing some of the issues that were mentioned, about kids having the help they need when they need it.

I think I mentioned this last time.

I -- I -- in the (indiscernible) that I went to, the City Department of Education provided guidance counselors at that time. And I think that, if not for the guidance counselors, I would have been thrown out more often than I was.

So, I just think that it's really an important issue to address, and I'd like to know how that's working.

The other thing I wanted to ask about, is to mention to you something that's very important.

Three sessions ago, and it's when -- we came to an agreement, and we -- and you announced at city hall, a commitment to help families with special-needs children.

In that process, there was a memorandum of understanding, as well as the comments that you,

Mayor, mentioned at the press release -- at the press conference.

One of the critical parts of this much-needed reform, however, was the establishment of three-year settlements, which meant that parents that have children with special needs would not have to hire private attorneys over and over and over to make their case.

And the -- and besides the financial burden on these parents, I think everyone understands the difficulty that parents face, having to do their -- the best -- best that they can for each of these students; let alone, having to get ripped off by some lawyers year after year after year.

And I would just mention that, before you made this commitment -- and I thank you again -- the lawyers used to tell the parents that they're not going to get approved on these IEPs without hiring them.

Now, thanks to your work, the lawyers are saying, it's gonna get done, but the only way it's gonna get done is if you hire me.

And these parents are paying year after year after year.

So this -- these -- this -- these

settlements, that, in terms of this commitment that you made, there has been no movement. No movement at all.

And we've repeatedly asked, since the announcement, to have these three-year settlements implemented.

They have been implemented in other localities throughout New York State, and approved by SED in other counties, and they are, clearly, legally permissible.

(Pause in the proceeding.)

(The proceeding resumes.)

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I'm sorry, Senator.

SENATOR FELDER: It's not a problem.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Sherif keeps bothering me, Senator.

Senator Perkins intervened.

Thank you.

SENATOR FELDER: So we've -- it's clearly legal. State, federal, legal.

These three-year settlements provide parents with -- and their children stability, and still allow modification, obviously, if there's improvement.

If there's a situation where a student has a

learning disability that can be improved, then, obviously, that has to be -- what the -- has to be reevaluated.

But some of the kids who have lifelong disabilities, that, we know are not going to change.

So after multiple requests to have this three-year settlement policy implemented, I haven't gotten any response.

I will just say to you, that I don't want to go and bore you and everyone else here with a log that I've kept since the beginning, but I will go back to September of this year -- September of 2015, I should say.

I wrote you a letter, and never got a response.

I then wrote another letter in December.

And from September, up until last night, I left at least a half a dozen messages with people who work directly with you.

And, by the way, I like them all.

And the fact that I've been ignored, or -- I don't know what it is. I don't want to get into that, because that's something that I don't understand.

But, irrespective of that, one time, I would

say, once, in early January, someone called and said they're working on it.

Now, this has been going on for more than two years, and I know -- I know that you would not stand for this.

I know that, and I want to believe that.

So, it's not about Felder.

It's about hundreds of children, and what we've discussed.

So, finally, last night, I got a letter, an unsigned letter, by somebody who works with you, which falls far short of the commitments that we talked about.

So I -- I've rehashed some of that stuff enough.

And, uh -- I just want to ask you, point blank, I'm asking you to make a commitment to have this implemented before next year's cycle, because, if we get it done now, that means that parents that go through this process will have the ability, not to have to worry about it for three years, and not have to pay extraordinary costs to lawyers who are ripping them off for no reason.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I certainly agree with your focus on the parents, Senator. We've talked

about this a number of times.

And you will remember, when I was public advocate, we did a lot of work on this issue because I thought the system was rigged against the parents.

And I think your summation of the games that some of the lawyers played is right, but I would say it even more critically.

A parent who is dealing with a profound challenge --

And I say many times publicly, it's tough to be a parent to begin with in New York City, in modern culture, modern society.

-- but, then, if you're dealing with the challenge of a child with special needs, that's adding a whole nother layer of complexity and burden to your life.

And every parent would say, "Would do anything for our child," becomes the number-one focus, and everything else in life is still going on. All the bills have to be paid, et cetera.

So you would think, when it comes time to engage the Department of Education, the question would be at the Department of Education: How can we help you?

And I laid out, and I'll be happy to provide

the reports to the Committee, years ago, that that is not what happened. In fact, it was quite the opposite.

It was a system based on making it as difficult as possible for parents to access services; creating as many burdens as possible, so, bluntly, a number of parents would go away and not work their claim; and, it was a litigation-based system which was costly to everyone involved.

We said we were going to change that.

Now, you led in the Senate, and I know in the Assembly there was tremendous feeling for this as well, and we got to, I thought, in 2014, a very good decision.

It was a beginning. We didn't say it was everything.

It was a beginning.

My memory of what we agreed to did not fully treat this issue, and we have to treat it, and I'm going to speak to it in a moment.

But I think what we said in that agreement, we have been consistently following through on.

And I've talked to many parents and advocates for parents who say, it's not perfect yet.

No one is pretending it is.

But, that a very substantial change has occurred, by and large, in terms of the response of DOE to parents, the ease of the process, the amount of litigation, the outcomes for parents, that there's a real change that has happened in just two years' time.

We have a lot more to do.

On the question of your efforts on the three-year issue, I want to formally apologize.

There is no reason any member of the Legislature would have to go to such an extent to get a simple answer.

As you well know, we served together in the council.

Sometimes the answer won't be the one you seek, but you deserve an answer.

So I find it unacceptable that you did not receive an answer.

I apologize for that.

But what I can tell you, in the letter that was provided to you yesterday, is that we are now committing, when -- and I want to put the conditions out very clearly -- when there is no change -- no, you know, meaningful change in the IEP, in the specific plan for that child, and there is no

meaningful change in the service provided, that we think the three-year model makes sense.

And we will detail that in greater detail to you formally, and what kind of timeline.

I don't want to speak too much into detail today on the implementation timeline, because I want to make sure anything I say to you, we will keep to.

But I'm very hopeful that a lot of that, at least, can be done before the school year starting in September.

The -- but I want to emphasize, sometimes the IEP does change. Sometimes the IEP doesn't change, but the place and the kind of service changes.

So we do need to be, you know, straightforward about when there are variations.

But I agree with you, that, at the same time, there are many times where they're not.

And if there's no variation in the IEP or the type of service, there should not be a legal process, there should not be lawyers involved.

Just, we should make it very simple and straightforward for the parent, that they are approved and keep going with what they have.

So we will delineate that to you in greater detail in the next few days, and, we will put

timelines to how we will implement that.

SENATOR FELDER: So I just want to ask the same question again.

I'm asking you, very specifically, for a commitment to do everything humanly possible to have this implemented for the coming school year.

This is not the first -- I just want to correct some things.

If the Mayor wants, I would be happy to -- to -- I don't have an iPad or something to play the press conference, but it was very clear that the Mayor committed to doing these multiple-year agreements.

It's not something new.

One.

Two, this is not a question where there are -- it's like 50/50, you know, that there are some that have changes, and some that don't.

The majority of the kids, for example, who have autism, or who have Down syndrome, severe disabilities, unless there's some miracle by God, they're going to have those disabilities for the rest of their life.

And, obviously, this discussion about where things have changed, it's not new. We had this

discussion two years ago.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Yeah, but Senator, respectfully, we've made changes in a way that were not made previously. And I would like some acknowledgment of that fact.

SENATOR FELDER: You know what? I apologize, and it's not for somebody else.

I apologize myself.

I want to thank you for the improvements that have been made, clearly so.

But -- but, I'm your constituent.

And constituents don't call me to say what a great job I'm doing.

So I admit --

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Something we can all relate to.

SENATOR FELDER: Yes.

So I'm just telling you, with -- I'm sorry I didn't mention it earlier.

Clearly, you have the consummate professional, and what I would consider her to be the heroine for kids in the city, but, specifically, special-needs kids: Karen Goldmar (ph.).

I don't -- you know, some would say that she's an alien, because she can do so much during a

day.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I will deny she is an alien.

SENATOR FELDER: Okay. Wonderful person.

But getting back to the commitment --

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

SENATOR FELDER: I'm not done.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: I know.

SENATOR FELDER: And I don't have my notes, by the way.

-- I need a commitment, because it's not me.

And the apology I accept for the thousands of families. It's not for me.

I need to walk out here today and hear from you -- because I know you can do it -- that you are going to have this implemented for next year.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Okay. Senator, again, I'm going to be straightforward.

One, I think we have some differences on what was the original vision, but I think the underlying impulse was exactly the same.

I think you and I have felt a lot of the same things from day one.

I am happy to review all the videotapes in the world, because we have comported ourselves with

consistency.

And, again, for years and years, this was not acted on.

We have acted on it, which proves -- I believe in a thing called (indiscernible), and this proves, because we did something, that we intend to do more.

We didn't do this for superficiality.

We did this for a reason: That we want to lighten the burden on parents, and we want to get something done for kids.

So the reason I want to do this properly and carefully is, I'm not gonna ever say to you something very specific, and then not keep to it.

Do I want to get as much done for September, opening day of school, as humanly possible? Yes.

We will delineate exactly what that means.

I'll do you one better: We will delineate exactly what that means.

But to your core point, that no one should have to go to a lawyer and pay money and struggle for something that we all agree isn't necessary, I want to end that practice; there's no two ways about it.

And the reason we sent the letter, and

I again apologize for the delay -- is this is -- we actually are united in wanting to get to this place.

Do you have my commitment we want to get to this place? Yes.

As quickly as humanly possible? Yes.

What does that mean?

The ultimate concept, it does mean we will put it in writing and distribute it to the world.

SENATOR FELDER: And when will that be?

SENATOR MARCELLINO: I believe we can give you an answer by next week.

SENATOR FELDER: You mean the written --

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: A written answer.

SENATOR FELDER: I appreciate that.

Thank you very much.

And, again, thank you very much for the work you've done so far.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Thank you.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Senator Stavisky.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

Can I borrow?

(No working microphone.)

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you both for coming.

Very, very quickly I read your testimony, and you have four points --

I'll use my classroom voice.

-- you have four points of accomplishments of mayoral control.

There was one area that you did not discuss, and that is the question of discipline in the schools.

And I know you're proud of the fact that suspensions are down by approximately a third; and, yet, there was a story and an editorial in "The Daily News" in April, April 30th, that talked about the suspensions.

And one of the things, that when I visit --

(Microphone turned on.)

SENATOR STAVISKY: Now it's on.

One of the things that I -- that when I visit schools, supervisors often complain to me about how they're forced to reduce the number of in-school suspensions, et cetera.

And "The Daily News" uses the term in their editorials, I love, it said, restorative justice, or, something.

Can you comment on that, and how that is part of the mayoral-control issue?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Yes, thank you very much, Senator.

I'll start.

And I know the Chancellor certainly has strong views on this as well.

We believe that the important thing is to keep kids safe, and that you can keep kids safe the same time as creating a respectful environment, an environment where we choose the right disciplinary tools.

We do not choose tools that are unfair or discriminatory.

We do not choose tools that undermine the education process.

That we really figure out the appropriate way to create both discipline and to keep a child learning.

So, suspensions -- I'm just going to give you some facts I think say -- speak volumes, from the 2011 to 2012 school year, versus the last school year, 2014 to 2015; so, three-year span.

Suspensions are down 36 percent.

Arrests are down 68 percent.

Summonses are down 72 percent.

All crime in schools down 29 percent.

Major crimes down 25 percent.

Now, the experts I refer to when I give you

this information, are the NYPD and the School Safety Division.

The State of New York has a different way of keeping track of incidents, which we respect, but don't believe indicates the reality as well as the NYPD's statistics.

We think this is a better picture of what's going on in our schools; that the kinds of things that used to plague our schools have been greatly reduced; at the same time, we've enabled to approach discipline in a way that is more fair, less discriminatory, more conducive to education.

So, I find that a lot of the criticism is based on a misreading of the facts.

And, you know, again, I -- it's interesting that some -- some people, some commentators, like to invoke NYPD statistics when it's convenient to their cause, and then, suddenly, forget to look at them when it's not convenient to their cause.

Well, I go to those statistics regularly, and they prove that this approach is working well for our schools.

Chancellor, would you like to?

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Well, I think one of the most important things that we learned is that

suspensions were unequal around the city, depending on, school by school, race by race, gender by gender.

So one of the things we have tried very hard to do is to make suspensions more uniform: What is the right reason to suspend a student?

We have had students suspended for 10 days because they were wearing a hat in class, versus another school where that one might be a minor offense, or something.

So I think we really are working very hard to develop a universal decision on what's suspendible, what is the right amount of days.

I would never, never, say you can't suspend a student, but you have to have a really -- a series of steps.

We have put in, into many of our schools, more restorative justice practice, which simply means hiring an outside agency, like, you know, Morningside, PBIS; strategies that are proven by research, that have been training teachers.

They can do a better job of calming students down and dealing with students in a different way.

The other thing we've done, is we've started to retrain our school safety agents, so that instead

of escalating issues in some schools, they can deescalate issues.

You know, the idea of having students talk to teachers in small groups, having school safety agents join and get to know the kids who are most problematic, before they have do something like giving them a warrant or suspension.

I was a principal for 10 years.

In my 10 years I suspended one student.

Mostly in the cases, and I had kids who did some really strange things, but, my first strategy was to bring the parents in; to get some kind of sense, what's going on in the home?

Is there a different kind of discussion?

Maybe this child needs to see the guidance counselor.

I'm not a feel-good kind of person most of the time.

Does he need to see the guidance counselor once a week so we can get to the root of the problem?

Suspending a child, to put them out in the street, or to put them (indiscernible), is not going to change the behavior.

So we need to look at, what is the behavior,

what's causing the behavior, and then what's the appropriate measure?

Principals are, by law, and I expect superintendents -- and I called a few (indiscernible) on this -- to report it in what they call "ORS."

There's an ORS system, where you have -- OLRS -- all these initials -- where you put in a suspension, and then you call it in. And if it's a high-level suspension, you have to get permission.

But any principal --

And, by all means, you know, they can certainly call me. They call me on everything.

-- this happened in my school, and I wasn't allowed to do something.

I don't buy it is a very frequent occurrence.

But I do believe we have to invest a lot more time and energy -- and that's what we're doing with the mental health -- in retraining teachers on how to deal with kids who have real serious issues.

By the same token, there are kids who need to be suspended.

Or, they had -- we just had an issue two weeks ago, where we removed a student from a school, never to go back again. Not just a suspension, but

will never go back to that school.

So I do think there was a lot of work to be done.

But I do agree with the Mayor, that the City and the State are not using the same measures, and we need to get on the same page, because sometimes what you read in the newspapers itself is half-truths, and we need to all be able to use the same language and the same measures across the board.

SENATOR STAVISKY: We're not talking about a student wearing a hat.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: I understand.

But, also --

SENATOR STAVISKY: I mean, I taught for almost seven years. I, obviously, never -- I never really had a disciplinary problem.

But, when you do have a disruptive child, it's not just the one child. It's the entire class that's affected.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Absolutely.

But that's why we need to do the retraining.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Let me rephrase the question, real quick.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Okay.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Then we can assume that supervisors and teachers are not being told that they can't report disciplinary issues?

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Absolutely not.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: No.

And by the way, we have, at every borough field office, a -- people called "student support services.

And they -- and one of the things that -- we just did an in-house evaluation of some of these services.

And what they're saying to us is that, they're very good at being -- when principals call them, they're good at deescalating issues. But what we need to do more of, is how do we prevent these issues?

And one of the things -- I mean, it's corollary, although it's not necessarily tied in, I think, May 17th, we're having a day called "Team-Up Day, where we've asked, I think, 300-some-odd schools in the city to team up with their local precincts, so we can start looking at bringing people into the schools to talk to kids about the correct behaviors, and how do you look at

the police officers?

And the same thing, we are having an awards ceremony, actually, this week, for school safety agents that have gone above and beyond to create a culture in their schools of productive climate, so we can deescalate and prevent.

But, by all means, if something serious is wrong, then, by all means, you've got to go to the extreme.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Yeah, Senator, just a quick addition.

Thank you again for your service to the New York City schools.

But, I was a public school parent --

SENATOR STAVISKY: So was I.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: -- for the entire time of both my kids' public education.

I'm very familiar with the fact, if there was a disruptive child in the classroom, it can affect everyone.

We don't want an absence of reporting. We want everything reported.

We're saying, the solution, as the Chancellor just said powerfully, from her, you know, 50-year career as an educator, sometimes you need a

suspension.

There's a lot of times when there's another tool.

We want to know anything that's going on.

We want to engage the parents --

I'm going to give you a traditional thought here.

-- you know, engage the parents to help us address the issue with their child.

So, it must be addressed and resolved.

We just don't believe suspension should be used as often as it was in the past.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Senator Peralta.

SENATOR PERALTA: Thank you.

First and foremost, I want to congratulate you, Mr. Mayor, and Chancellor:

For the 20 percent increase in graduation rates since mayoral control has been implemented;

The 92 percent attendance increase in the last decade, which has been the highest;

The decrease in the dropout rate, which is down to 9 percent;

And the huge success of pre-K.

I want to congratulate you on those issues.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Thank you very much.

SENATOR PERALTA: I have a two-part question, and I think it goes to the heart of why we're here.

First, do you believe that -- since we, representatives on the state level, are, in a way, investors, since we invest a large amount of money into the educational system, both on the operational and on the capital end, and since we also represent hundreds of thousands of constituents in the city and outside of the city of New York, do you believe that we should have, as a body, an opportunity to hold you, the Mayor, accountable every couple of years on mayoral control?

And if you do, if that's the case, if you believe that we should have that right, since we are investing large amounts of money on the educational system, why the seven years; the seven years that you're requesting?

And I understand that you -- some of your -- part of your answer may be based on what your predecessor got, but, some may argue that it was seven years too long, what your predecessor got.

So, why the seven years?

Why not two or three years, for example, where you can have mayoral control go into a year

after a certain mayor becomes mayor?

So, as opposed to giving seven years, where we will not have -- and I understand, you know, you -- benefit of the doubt, and being optimistic, you would hope you would get reelected.

But let's just say that, God forbid, that you don't get reelected, and there's someone else that becomes mayor.

Then, if we give seven years, what -- we won't have an opportunity to talk to that particular mayor in seven years, until after that mayor is up.

So, why not have it two or three years, instead of the seven that you're requesting?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Well, Senator, I would differentiate the ability to talk as an investor and as partners, which I was happy to do, for example, at the budget hearing, and I'm happy to be doing now.

And I think that's a good and normal part of the process, that we work together, all of us.

I -- you know, I said at the beginning, we couldn't achieve what we achieved on pre-K without all of you, we couldn't achieve what we achieved on after-school without all of you.

We should be in a constant dialogue.

And I'm very happy to account for what we've achieved, and take the questions, and talk it through any time.

But, that's a different question than the governance structure, in my view.

The governance structure should rise above any question of who the person elected is, or what party they're a member of, or what their ideology is.

As I said at the beginning, what an interesting situation that unites, you know, Michael Bloomberg, Rudy Giuliani, and me.

We all agree, we're absolutely in lockstep, that mayoral control is the right way to get things done for the kids, and that it creates the most essential accountability we can ask for in the government: hold one person accountable, and the public can hire or fire that person.

In my view -- and the other point is, that it's far superior to what was there before, and there no third way.

There is -- I've not heard a single offer of an alternative system that would work better.

So when I add up all those pieces, I would say to you, it was authorized for seven years,

renewed for six more.

We believe that that seven-year mark proved to be very successful; that the experience the first seven years of mayoral control were unquestionably, a success.

And, that the numbers that we've presented today on graduation rate and test scores and increased safety in the schools, et cetera, started with my predecessor -- even though we had our disagreements -- we've been able to build on it, and add a whole host of new elements, is a proof point about why mayoral control works.

So I would argue that, mayoral control, as a governing system, should be ratified for a substantial amount of time so we can keep the work of helping our kids moving.

But, in terms of the constant dialogue that we should be in, either in a group setting like this, or individual settings, of course I believe in that simultaneously.

What I wouldn't want to see, and I think your question very fairly raises kind of a counter-reality, which is, that the decisions were made based on who won an election or what their philosophy is.

Well, the people of New York City are responsible for making that decision.

We're in a representative government, but we -- you know, we, ultimately, all defer to the people.

If the people choose mayoral control because they support a candidate who believes in mayoral control, or the people choose a certain course for our schools, that's their choice.

And I would hope we're gonna work with the person who wins in either situation, whether they're in our party or not.

SENATOR PERALTA: Thank you.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Thank you.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Senator Hoylman.

SENATOR HOYLMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you for holding this hearing.

I think it's very important that we have public hearings on such important issues.

After all, we are discussing the future of our economy, and the basis upon which we operate a deliberative democracy; so there's really nothing more important than the management of our public school system.

I wanted to point out to you that we've not really heard from a single individual here, other than, perhaps, some polling data that shows that some New Yorkers are split on the idea of mayoral control.

But all of the information you've presented today points in the other direction, and very strongly so.

And as my colleague just mentioned, graduation rates up 20 percent under the model of mayoral control.

Attendance rates, academic performance, the big ideas that you're able to push through, like pre-K, the wonderful progress you've made in community schools.

By the way, my daughter now wears eyeglasses, prescribed to her at age 5, because of your program for vision in the schools.

And, the increase in parental involvement, something I hear as a public school parent.

The statistic you show is 38 percent improvement.

But one thing that I think it's almost hard to put your finger on is the fact that mayoral control has, in my opinion, reduced the level of

rancor and dissension and antagonism among a number of stakeholders that are so important to the management of our school system.

Whether it be our teachers, whether it be our administrators, our public school parents, the local community, the fact that you were able to present a coherent, logical, and responsive management structure, I think gives a lot of New Yorkers confidence that, if they do have a problem, they know where to go.

So I wanted to point that out to you as something that isn't as tangible.

And also wanted to point out that mayoral control is working all across the country.

There are cities, Mr. Chair -- the Center for American Progress recently released a report that shows that there were resource-management and student-achievement gains in cities, not just New York; New Haven, Connecticut; Chicago; Philadelphia; Baltimore; Hartford; Harrisburg; Boston; Providence, Rhode Island.

So, this isn't such a shocking revelation, today, that your success has been sustained and tangible. I think we're seeing it all across the country.

So, I guess I'll close with a question about how you think we -- you know, what -- what your interaction has been with some of the people who have the biggest stake in the future of our school system, which are big employers.

And I know we have a witness list of a number of folks from the business community who are going to speak on behalf of mayoral control.

What are they saying about it?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Well, thank you very much, Senator, for the question.

I have been very struck by how strongly business leaders feel we need mayoral control of education. It's very consistent.

And I -- again, to Senator Peralta's question, these are some people who agree with me on a number of areas, there's some people who disagree with me on a number of areas, but still believe, fundamentally, that we need coherent governance, we need accountability.

I think they use their own values, in terms of management, and look at this, and it much more resembles what they would do within their own organizations in terms of clear lines of authority, real accountability measures, consequences if things

don't work.

And, so, I've been very appreciative of the support we've received of a widespread swath of the business community.

The technology sector is a great example, where there are, you know, 300,000 jobs in New York City.

I would dare say tremendously important to the future of New York State, that that technology sector continue to grow in New York City.

The technology-sector leaders have been adamant that they need our school system to become more and more effective, and they believe in issues like Computer Science For All and pre-K, but they understand these things have to happen quickly and urgently, and that can only happen through a mayoral-control system.

So the -- you know, we have come to, all of us assume that we're living in a very partisan age, but, there are moments where people agree, and there are moments where people agree across partisan lines.

You'll see, in addition to the business support, tremendous support from labor.

Again, is it a perfect consensus? No.

But I can say, you know, with a certain rye smile on my face, that consensus is a hard thing to come by in New York City.

And in the scheme of things, this is an area where I think there's more agreement than most in public policy.

And, certainly, a lot of very serious people care deeply about the future of New York City, really are deeply involved in this effort to preserve mayoral control and strengthen it for the future.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: And I just want to add, that since I've been through every system in 50 years, there was a time when the time of chancellors was two years or less because, if there was a public disagreement, it destabilized the system.

And I worked under many chancellors -- and I liked a lot of them -- and they were here today, gone tomorrow, because there was a disagreement publicly.

And it meant that all the principals were a little bit, What do we do now? Or the teachers were unsettled.

You need stability. You need consistency.

You need to say, these are the promises I made, these are promises I'll keep.

And it's been a constant shovel across this county, the average tenure of superintendents is 2 1/2 years. And that says a lot about the instability of education.

So I believe this is not just about because it's the right thing to do. It's because the people in the trenches -- the teachers, the principals -- need that stability.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: And one more point on that, our whole school system has needed that stability for a long time.

And that's why I think it's important that people have guarantees that there was going to be a governing structure they can depend on.

You know, that's -- I think what we would yearn for, for the future, is an even more stable, professional, effective approach to education; something that often eluded us in the past.

But people knowing that the governance structure is set and now we can get to work, deepening the reforms, deepening the improvements, I think that's the best thing for all the people who are trying to educate our kids.

SENATOR HOYLMAN: As a public school parent of a 5-year-old, I just wanted to tell you how appreciative I am, and keep up the good work.

And, for the record, I strongly support continuing mayoral reform, Mr. Chair.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Thank you.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you, Senator.

Senator DeFrancisco.

SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Before I ask any questions, I just want to express my great dismay that Senator Hoylman didn't bring his daughter to an ophthalmologist or an optometrist, or someone, before she went to school.

I mean, she had to rely on a public institution to find out she needed eyeglasses.

SENATOR HOYLMAN: Can I point out, if I may, I did, and they missed the diagnosis.

SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Oh.

SENATOR HOYLMAN: It was the public school system that found it.

SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Oh, okay. Very good.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: One more point for us. Thank you.

[Applause.]

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: And, actually,

you're in a phenomenal school as well.

SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Very good.

And, did you sue the ophthalmologist for malpractice?

SENATOR HOYLMAN: That's your job, not mine.

SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Oh, oh, wow.

Well, I won't answer that.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: But, specifically, I had a few questions.

You had mentioned -- it's been mentioned a couple of times since I've been here, that there's -- there's only two systems, the old system and this system, as far as mayoral control.

Can you just refresh my memory?

In the old system, for example, in a teacher's contract, who did the negotiations, and who made the decision as to the outcome?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I'll let the Chancellor speak to it, having lived in all levels of the old system.

I can certainly affirm to you, it was not the mayor.

But go ahead, Chancellor.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: No, the

negotiations were always done as part of the larger DOE, whatever the central unit was, and it was done for the whole city.

But it was not -- I don't believe the mayor was ever involved.

I really don't know about the negotiations per se.

SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Okay, but do you know who made the final decision?

Was it the board that made the final decision?

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Most likely.

There were actually four different systems.

When I started teaching, there was a total centralize. No decisions were made that were not made at the infamous 110 Livingston Street. Everything was decided there.

Then we went to community school boards, but no community school board negotiated their own contracts. This was all done centrally again.

SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Centrally, under the education department; not -- by the mayor's education department?

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: The chancellor --

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: The chancellor -- the

board chose the chancellor -- no, the board chose the chancellor.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: The chancellor did not get involved in most of the negotiations.

SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: So somebody did, somebody made the decision.

Does anybody know?

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: It was a mess -- I love this.

It was a messy three-way negotiation.

And, generally -- you know, I also lived through the 1968 teachers strike.

There was a lot of dissension in a lot of the other systems.

SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Three-way negotiation.

Who were the three parties?

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Well, I would say, the mayor's office, the board of trustees at the central office, and the unions.

That would be three-ways.

SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Okay, so, ultimately would the mayor have to give the okay for that salary increase?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I did not participate in that element of the system, so I don't want to

give you a specific answer.

What I can say, I want to restate what I said at the beginning:

The current system, with pure mayoral control, pure accountability, when it comes to negotiation of the contract, like every other labor contract, my Office of Labor Relations negotiates, and I have to approve on behalf of the people.

That was just not the case under the previous system. It was not as clear as that.

SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Okay. And just a suggestion: We might want to get a chair for this guy, because he's jumping up and down here.

And he's certainly capable of sitting at the big table.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I would agree with that, and I'm confused why he isn't, Senator.

I appreciate that.

Because he was at the budget hearings.

So, I don't know understand why was -- he left us.

SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Okay.

Now --

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Senator Felder is taking direct action.

Thank you, Senator.

SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: All right.

Now, following up on it: So the latest contract that was negotiated was by the Mayor's Office.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Of Labor Relations.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: And the Chancellor.

SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: And the Chancellor.

Now, please just explain, briefly, what the new contract was, 2014 was it negotiated?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Yes.

SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Okay. I see salary increases for 2013, 1 percent; '14, 1 percent; '15, 1 percent; '16, 1.5 percent; '17, 2.5 percent; '18, 3 percent; which is somewhat comparable to at least those contracts that have been negotiated for other units.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Correct.

SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Okay. What I don't understand, and -- is, then there's lump-sum payments.

Two -- ten thousand -- 2015, 12 1/2 percent; '17, 12 1/2 percent; '18, '19, and '20, 25 percent each.

What does that mean?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I'm going to explain in broad terms, because, one, I'm not a lawyer; two, I'm not a labor-relations specialist. But -- and we'll certainly have, if you'd like, our commissioner go into detail, but I'll give you the broad stroke.

So when we came into office, as you may know, we had none of our --

SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Can I interrupt you, because there's a lot of people?

You've approved the contract.

You must at least -- these lump-sum payments, they must mean something.

And what do they -- 25 percent of, what?

And how does that affect the annual increases in these later years?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Yeah, so I'm going to do my best, two years later, to give you the right summary.

When I came into office, there were no labor contracts settled. We had, the entire workforce was not under contract.

Now, I believe you and I might share a classification as fiscally responsible.

And, so, the mandate I gave my team was, we needed to settle the contracts.

It was not appropriate to have our workforce not under contract, but we had to do it in a way that was fiscally prudent, because this was going to have a long-term impact on the city.

In fact, the uncertainty of our labor relations being unresolved was creating a huge question mark for budget monitors, rating agencies, et cetera, and for the future of the city.

So I said, I need long-term contracts. I need them to be fiscally-sound.

Remembering that different unions had their contracts expired at different moments, to construct a pathway to resolution was a little different for each union.

But what we said was, once we established a clear pattern, we were going to stick to it; so, of course, we wanted a pattern that we thought was responsible.

In the first instance, the teacher contract was the first major contract. We put together a combination of pieces to get to a fair outcome.

And then every contract thereafter was patterned on it.

Because there were out-years, back-years, that were farther back than almost any other union, we had to construct a way to compensate for those past years.

So that's where some of those elements were included.

SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Okay, I get it. I get it.

But, in 2015, there was a lump sum of 12.5 percent of, what?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Okay, and what I do not ever want to do is give you a detail I cannot specifically explain, so I will get a letter from our Labor Relations commissioner, detailing each element of the contract deal.

SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Okay, but, one of the issues, obviously, we are at a point where we're determining whether to continue mayoral control.

And, if there is something that's done while there was mayoral control, maybe that could change somebody's mind that maybe you're not as fiscally sound as you may think you are.

And since we're sending so much money out every year at the State, I think it's a relevant issue.

So when I see a 1 percent increase in 2015, but then see 12.5 percent lump sum of "something," sounds a hell of a lot more than 1 percent.

And then when it gets to be 25 percent of "something" in 2019, it's -- 2018, it's certainly more than the 3 percent.

So that would be pretty important to me.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I appreciate that, and I agree with you.

I would say it this way:

When that contract was agreed upon, I think it was May of 2014, it got an immense amount of scrutiny from rating agencies, from fiscal monitors, from all levels of government.

And the response to it also included an unprecedented amount of health-care savings, which, as you know, is one of the number-one areas we have to address if we're going to create fiscal stability for the long term.

I can safely say to you that, across the spectrum, and this also was I think true in the business community, there was a sense that it was a fair contract.

And we'll get you the exact delineation of it, because those specific elements do not reflect

the salary dynamics.

I want you to see the salary progression narrowly.

SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Can you at least answer, 25 percent of, what?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Again, I'm -- in the interest of making sure I never give you an imprecise answer, I'm not going to offer --

SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Maybe this guy knows.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Sherif, do you want to give an answer?

I would welcome you into the proceedings.

SHERIF SOLIMAN: I don't have an answer handy at the moment.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: But maybe Commissioner Lynn can give you the detail.

But I think the important point is this:

We -- I don't think there's any local government in the country that goes through more scrutiny than we do.

We put together a labor deal. It was very strongly affirmed across the spectrum, and then became the pattern for all the other deals, which has, ultimately, saved the taxpayer a lot of money and allowed us fiscal stability.

And I'm happy to go into more detail.

I'll get the whole contract, and we're happy to discuss it with you.

SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Okay. That's great.

Number -- the only other area I want to get into -- I have a bunch of questions, but there's a lot of people here -- relating to charter schools.

There was a requirement, I guess, that you -- if space is available, I guess, there was co-location that's required.

Since this requirement went into effect, do you have an estimate as to how many charter schools were denied the ability to co-locate in a school?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: We can get you the list of who applied and what the outcome was.

There's been a number of charter schools that we have co-located.

There have been some that, for the specific proposal, we could not fulfill as it was requested. In many cases, we found an alternative.

We've said from the beginning, we're going to work with charter schools.

We do ask them to work with us as well, because we have a set of standards that we have to achieve.

By the way, and we talked earlier about the pre-K initiative, where we had very strong participation from our charter schools; very successful.

So, a lot of resources are going into our charter schools from the City budget, but we continue to make co-location decisions, and trying to accommodate them when we can.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Very few were actually denied. And in some of the cases, specifically, was that they might not have been as inclusive as they should have.

We expect a school to serve a fair amount of special-needs kids and English-language learners.

But I think, at this point, we're working much more cooperatively, and working in a good way, with most of our charter schools.

SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Okay, last question is: If we could get this information, I think, on some cases, there was an appeals process.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Absolutely.

SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: So some cases, if the City, for whatever reason, believed it was not appropriate for a co-location, an appeal -- so it was denied, so then the school appeals.

I'd like to find out what percentage of those appeals were successful on behalf of the charter schools, to get an idea of whether --

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: I'll get back to you on that.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Yes, so -- and all of this, you know, you're referring to the 2014 law change.

SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Right.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: So we'll get you the statistics from that -- beginning of that following school year, till now.

SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Exactly.

Okay. I -- well, I better stop at this point; but, thank you.

I appreciate it.

And, God bless you.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: God bless you, Senator.

Thank you.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Senator Krueger.

SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you very much, Mr. Mayor. Thank you for your testimony.

So many of my colleagues have pointed out the things I wanted to ask you about, so it will be a

little shorter.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Senator Montgomery.

SENATOR KRUEGER: No, not that short, Carl.

You know not to challenge me like that.

Again, I want to highlight the appreciation that so many of us have for the statistical improvements in the New York City Public School System, both, under your tenure, and, in fact, under the previous tenure of Mayor Bloomberg, because I think most of us do realize, when you look at the data, when you track what's happening in New York City public schools under mayoral-control model versus the previous model, it's clearly a better model.

I don't think any of us, I don't think you would probably think, it's a perfect model, as one might argue it's almost impossible to come up with a perfect public education system in this country.

But I know, speaking from my district, my parents feel very strongly that the schools continue to improve.

You know, the irony for my district is just the continuing fight for space to put more kids, because parents are choosing to stay in the city of New York, choosing public schools for their

children, making more demands on your administration, on Chancellor Fariña, every day, because they believe in the public school system, and so they want better, because there isn't a parent in this country who doesn't want better for their children.

So, ironically, nothing causes more problems than success, because everybody just keeps coming to you with, and now we need X, and now we need Y, and now we need Z.

And I think that that's right, and it reflects the fact that people have a commitment to both our city and to our public school system.

I also, just for the record, want to say, I support mayoral control, even though I might fiddle with some things in it.

But I want to highlight the importance of this Legislature, not continuing to play the game of giving you one-year extensions.

There is no way to plan for a public school system for over a million children, not knowing, from year to year to year, whether or not your entire system is going to go into legal collapse every 12 months.

So I urge my colleagues who are here today to

recognize the importance of not allowing New York City to be left on a ledge that is particularly unhealthy for a public education system.

So to turn this into a question: What would it mean if we, literally, kept going at a year-to-year model, for the City and the Department of Education?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: It creates instability, and it means that, as you're trying to do big changes, which we're trying to do everything, we're trying to improve the schools, fundamentally, over years and years.

I gave that example of getting all our kids to third-grade reading level over the next 10 years.

A massive endeavor. It's never been attempted before.

Anything that stands in the way of it is a disservice to our children.

So if we don't even know what our governance structure will be in a year, it does not allow us to achieve all that we need to achieve. It doesn't allow us to put all the focus that we need to put into continually deepening these initiatives.

And I think -- I appreciate your point a

lot -- to what end?

You know, if there were an alternative on the table that was better, I would debate that any day.

But since I have not heard anyone come forward and say, you know: The system we want to use is X. Let's show why you that is a better system.

It feels, a lot of times, like one-hand clapping.

Here's a system that has produced stunning results in 13 years' time.

If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

Let's deepen our commitment to it, and let's get to work fixing these big challenges in our schools.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: It's jut focus time.

You know, every time you have to explain something, you spend two days preparing.

It's like the paperwork that principals do, it takes some time.

The time for a leader that's an education leader is to be in schools, is to be talking to parents.

And this is diversion, and I think we need to

stay based and focused on the work.

SENATOR KRUEGER: And I guess I would also just highlight, the problem, if Albany chose to try to micromanage public education in the city of New York:

We can all give our examples of when we have frustrations, even when dealing with the Department of Education, or any other agency, in trying to get things done.

But even my colleague John DeFrancisco's questions about co-location clearly show, he's from Syracuse, which I'm sure has all its own issues, but, to understand at the neighborhood level, the issues of co-location of schools, why it sometimes works and why it sometimes doesn't, given the geographic realities and the space realities of schools, reflects the fact that Albany really shouldn't be making those decisions.

I can speak for my district, where, literally, the teachers and the parents and the principals, in coordination, fight to the death to keep bathroom space not being turned into educational space in a few of our schools, because they're so desperate for space.

And the concept that somebody outside of the

city of New York would dictate, no, no, no, you have to make a decision to co-locate, just because somebody else asked for the space, again, there are certain roles for a state legislature, and they're very important ones, and there are certain roles that we have to leave to the local government, and leave, in my opinion, to a model where it reports to the mayor, and the mayor is held accountable for the actions taken.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: I'm going to videotape you and use that, because I was just, actually, in one of your schools in one of your districts that is co-located.

But those principals chose to be co-located. They decided ahead of time what they want to share between them.

And in one particular case, there -- things that they're sharing is their special emphasis on special-needs kids, and they don't want them moving from one school to the other.

So the elementary schools in the building, very overcrowded. But, the middle school is also in the building and taking on a large majority of the kids.

So there are good things about co-location,

but local is the right way to go.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: And just, finally, Senator, that I agree with your statement.

I also agree, as I said with Senator Peralta, that we should be in regular dialogue.

We are very happy to be in regular dialogue with the Legislature because there should be a partnership.

That's a different question from how to manage the day-to-day, hour-to-hour, of a system with 1.1 million kids.

But at the same time, we honor the fact that we want to be in regular communication with the state government about how we do things together.

SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

This is what this Committee is doing right now. The fact of this hearing is a matter of oversight.

We spend $9 billion of the taxpayers' money, we send to it the city of New York, and the residents of the state of New York who pay that money, who pay those tax dollars, because it doesn't all come from the city, have an expectation that we know what we're doing, and we're going to ask some

questions, which is what we're doing now.

We're trying to get information and clarify issues and clear it up, because these people, whether they live in the city or not, have to vote on that $9 billion, and they should do so with some level of intelligence.

Senator Montgomery.

SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Yes, thank you.

I want to first thank the Chair for holding this hearing.

It is important, and for future generations, what we do this year, and every year thereafter, makes a huge difference for young people in our state.

So, I appreciate this opportunity.

And I want to just say to you, Mayor de Blasio, I want to thank you for all of the positive things that have happened.

I must correct you in saying that, prior to your becoming mayor, we did have some huge issues and problems with the system, and it was based on the few of the administration as it relates to education policy.

So, I just want to make sure you understand, you have made a difference.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Thank you.

And if I may just interrupt briefly, you and I agree on many, many of the areas where there were real differences with the previous administration.

I think I can say, honorably and honestly, there were areas of real achievement that we have built upon, there were areas of real disagreement we've tried to make major changes.

I don't feel any contradiction in acknowledging those two realities.

SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Thank you.

I do want to say, I've said publicly, and privately, that the best thing that has happened, in my opinion, to the education system in the city of New York is Chancellor Fariña.

And as you know, the people who came to be chancellor prior to her, I believe four chancellors before her, all required a waiver, because they did not possess what she has brought to the system.

So I want to compliment you on that.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I agree with your assessment entirely.

SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Okay. Thank you.

So -- so, I just want to say now, we're talking about, you mentioned the structure, and how

that is, obviously, related to policy, but, certainly, we can do very much different with the structure, and still maintain a level of excellence and integrity, hopefully, depending on the chancellor.

So my question to you is: If you are no longer the mayor, and we do not have a mayor with the same goals and interests that you have, and vision that you have, and commitment that you have, to the youngsters in the system; and, therefore, you're not -- we won't have an opportunity to have a "Chancellor Fariña" leading our system, maybe we'll have another kind of business person, or someone who really has -- doesn't have her level of expertise and commitment and skill, how do we ensure that that person, who was not -- does not have the same commitments that you have, can -- we can depend on that person to select a "Carmen Fariña"?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Well, I appreciate the question, and it's obviously a question about democracy.

Look, I would argue, again, that this system is the best way to achieve things for our children regardless of who holds the mayorality, because, at a very minimum, it has helped to create efficiency,

it has helped to create reform, it has helped to end some of the corruption, you know, that was so consistent, sadly, in the old reality.

I believe that is just structurally true.

And I also think, as a matter of democracy, if there's a single person in charge and that person is in the glare of the lights every day, and I can certainly attest to that fact, anything that I decide in terms of our schools will get an immense amount of scrutiny.

And, there's always consequences in public life.

As you know, if you do something and the public disagrees with you, even on a single issue, it affects your ability as a leader to do any number of other things.

So there's a constant feedback loop, a constant accountability reality, separate even from the ultimate accountability of elections.

I just believe that is structurally sounder, and I don't believe there's any governance system for schools that has been found to be better.

So the question then: What would happen if someone came in with a different approach or different philosophy?

Well, you know, I'm enough of a believer in democracy to say, that person would have had to argue that case to the people in the most transparent era we've ever been in in the history of humanity.

Because of digital media and everything else, there is the most information available, and the greatest opportunity for people to participate.

If someone comes in with a vision and wins an election in that context, the people have spoken, is my view, but then they will be held accountable every day in a variety of ways.

And we're proud of having reinvigorated the community education counsels.

We're proud to have a panel, a PEP, that is vibrant, that debates issues, that often demands changes and revisions.

So I think the current iteration, as we are applying what you have granted with mayoral control, is a more democratic one, a more rooted one in the community.

And I believe history tells us, it's hard to go back, in a good way; that, now, there is an expectation of a PEP where these debates will take place. There's an expectation of CECs that will

strongly advocate for the needs of communities. There's an expectation that, every Saturday, you know, CEC presidents are meeting with the Chancellor.

It's hard to put those genies back in the bottle, in a good way. The bar has been set higher.

I also believe, one last point on the educator point, I'm very proud to have named the first educator of the last five chancellors.

It was absolutely necessary.

You know it was something I pledged to the people I would do.

I think that's going to be, also, a very big pressure on whoever is, in the future, in the mayorality, to continue that tradition, because Chancellor Fariña's results have been so positive, but I think parents believe an educator should run the school system.

So I think some of this goes beyond even any one election.

It's something changing, I think, in the expectations of the people and the parents.

SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Quite frankly, Mr. Mayor, I am looking at the presidential campaign right now.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Oh, touché.

SENATOR MONTGOMERY: And I have some real fears about what we could end up with.

But not to belabor that.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I'm sorry, just very quickly: I do believe the labor -- the local level, there's a much higher level of accountability, and a very specific, tangible scrutiny at the local level than what we are seeing.

And I hear your point loud and clear, on the national level, but I think there's a difference.

SENATOR MONTGOMERY: I should hope so.

The -- the -- then the question that I have to you two, related to the structure, is that people seem to believe that any change in the current system, any reform, you know, broadening the number of decision, or appointments, that could be -- entities that could be appointing people to the PEP or the board, or whatever, means that we now have to go back to the old system of community school boards.

I do not believe that.

In fact, the first part of the reform of the mayoral -- the issue of restructuring the board, was that we remove some of the -- some of the authority

of the community school boards, which I thought was a good thing.

Then, when we moved to the point where the mayor had so control of the entire system, because, essentially, that's what we're talking about: Who is the ultimate single authority?

And that now is you.

So, you make all decisions, including who is the chancellor, and who the majority of the people are on the PEP.

That is the problem that we have, because, you are a mayor for four years, possibly eight years.

We come in, then, with another mayor for another period of time.

The last mayor was 12 years.

So, how can you then say that there is accountability that is spread throughout the structure?

And, can we make changes that do not require going back to the community school board, but that at least provide some level of accountability to the people, and especially to the children of the system, in our state?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I believe there is

tremendous accountability right now.

I really very much respect the question, but, again, the people make that decision in a way that was never true before mayoral control.

And, you know, you and I, I'm sure both, didn't always agree with the judgment of the people on who should lead the city, but the people decided.

So, I think the much better approach is what we have now.

Someone runs for mayor, lays out a vision.

They are responsible for achieving it.

They are held accountable every day.

Any misstep will be noted.

Any success, it would be nice if that's noted too.

And then, you know, they have to see if they get their employment contract renewed.

But, there's all sorts of pressures created by all levels of government in terms of accountability, created by the media, created by parents, created by PEPs, created by CECs.

There's plenty of oversight, questioning, scrutiny, critical thinking.

And I think it adds up to, and I can say, having lived it now for almost 28 months, that it is

not, by any stretch of the imagination, sort of an isolated dynamic, where someone in my role is making decisions with no reference to all these other voices and all these other concerns.

It's a constant daily reality of listening to all the other stakeholders, and, ultimately, making decisions.

But what I would argue is where we can't go back, and it's not just a matter of the community school boards.

We can't go back to a system where there was not a person who makes the ultimate decision and can make it in real time.

Because -- I know you agree with us on what pre-K has meant, and I really appreciate your support, and everyone's support here, for our pre-K initiative.

There is no way on earth it could have been achieved in two years if there wasn't enough capacity, in terms of the decision-making and driving an entire government to a goal.

If that was not held by the mayor, and the mayor alone, it would not have worked.

The same with after-school, the same with Computer Science For All, the same with AP in every

high school, it just wouldn't have worked.

I can say it for a fact.

And, the proof is in the pudding of what happened before.

Look how many times, as the Chancellor described, there was no stability in our school system, things didn't move.

We had horribly low levels of achievement.

Folks who were underprivileged to begin with got more underprivileged in our schools.

And, chancellors were constantly cycling in and out.

And, there was no forward motion in the greatest city in the country.

So, our schools were not the greatest. Our governance was not the greatest.

Today, by contrast, we are in a position to be a national leader on education, and reach people in a way we never had before, and address inequity in a way we never did before.

That requires urgency.

You cannot achieve urgency if there isn't an ultimate decision-maker.

SENATOR MONTGOMERY: And just I -- having lived through the other -- the prior administration

under this system that we have, the mayoral control, there was so much upheaval in the system, that it was just an incredible experience.

So, you have brought stability, but, I'm not sure that this, that what we have, offers us in future years, and for future generations, the kind of stability that you're talking about, unless the person brings to that position a commitment to that.

But I will just -- one last issue that I would like to raise with you.

We talk about issues around services to children, and the 94 schools, in particular, that are the --

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: The renewal schools?

SENATOR MONTGOMERY: -- the renewal schools.

I want to thank you, and I love the community-school programs, and all of those things that you've done, that have made a difference.

And I'm very much aware they came because of our Chancellor.

So I want to thank the Chancellor, right here.

But, I just want to ask you: How many of those 94 schools have a school-based health clinic that provides health and mental-health services to

the children in those schools?

SENATOR MARCELLINO: We'll get you the exact numerical quote, unless one of my colleagues has it now.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: We will have (indiscernible).

SENATOR MONTGOMERY: I would appreciate that.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Let me just clarify that.

The goal for all -- renewal schools are also community schools, under our model.

SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Yes.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: And the goal for all our community schools, which is an initiative that's really taken shape over the last year or two, is that physical and mental-health capacity be embedded into every school.

It's part of what I think is so powerful about the community-school concept, is to be able to address what, you know, we were talking earlier, about the eyeglasses.

Whether it's an eyesight issue, which we know, historically, many good, young people weren't diagnosed with having an eyesight problem, that held them back, educationally.

Young people who had dyslexia, no one figured it out until it was too late.

Or -- so, physical things, but also mental-health challenges.

So, right now, there was some capacity, but the idea is, in every school, to have substantial capacity, both on the mental-health and the physical-health side, in all community schools, ergo all renewal schools.

SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Thank you for that.

And I just want to, again, say "thank you" to the Chancellor for the vision that you've brought, and the hard work that you do, to make this system really work, and be responsive to the children.

So, thank you.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Thank you.

SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Thanks, Mayor.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Senator Comrie.

SENATOR COMRIE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good afternoon, Mr. Mayor, and Chancellor.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Good afternoon.

SENATOR COMRIE: Appreciate you being here all day to listen to our concerns.

And, I want to thank the Chair for holding the meeting, and it is an issue that impacts

everyone in the state.

I want to align myself with the -- some of the comments that Senator Montgomery said, in terms of the fact that you have raised the bar by hiring an excellent chancellor to govern the system, and to ensure that there was a better level of discourse.

She has truly changed the focus and made it better, in many ways, for people to communicate with the Chancellor directly.

And I want to applaud you and the Chancellor for everything that you've done since you've arrived, to try to improve the mayoral-control system.

As you know, I represent southeast Queens, and we have many schools in the district that are in dire need of extra resources.

And one of the issues that I wanted to bring up, since people are bringing up things other than mayoral control today, is the funding formula.

If a school is behind, they can never catch up under this funding formula.

If a school has no science labs or no curriculum extras, they can never catch up under this funding formula.

The teachers, the principals, are restrained

in their ability to handle everything, since they're handling everything, from maintenance, to programming, to extracurricular programming.

They can never catch up.

And I would strongly take the look, and hope that we can have more discourse about the funding formula, because if every school is getting dollars for a child, a school that is already a decade behind can never catch up.

And I would hope that we address that more clearly in a different venue.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: May I speak to that for a moment, Senator?

SENATOR COMRIE: Sure.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: The -- I want to repeat, because I think it's important, that -- to the previous points from Senator Montgomery: So all the renewal and community schools, that's a total of 130 schools, are -- as of September, will be at 100 percent of their fair-student funding.

Right now -- thank you to the support you provided in the budget for education aid -- we are now at 91 percent -- average, 91 percent across the entire system of the fair-student-funding standard. No school, at this point, is less than 87.

If you will help us similarly next year, we will take that citywide average to 92.5 percent. The floor will become 90 percent.

If we continue on the same pace, with your help, we will have resolved the fair-student-funding issues by fiscal-year '21. We will have every school in the city at 100 percent.

So, I do deeply appreciate the point that there has been an injustice done, and that it doesn't change overnight.

I'm not, for a moment, underestimating that challenge, but I do want you to know, in real time, we can right that wrong, and then move the whole system forward.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: But, also, I want to -- an example --

SENATOR COMRIE: You know, I wasn't describing that problem to you.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: No, I understand.

SENATOR COMRIE: I'm saying, your administration is addressing it.

But as we move around to schools, and there are schools that are having problems because they don't have the facilities to keep up with other schools in the system, you know, if -- my district

has one of the highest median incomes for any district in the city -- in the state, but parents are mobile, so they take their kids to the schools that have the computer labs, that have the extra programming.

I have many parents in 29 that will take their kids to private school, even though the local school is closer, because the schools don't have the amenities that the other schools have.

And because of the funding formulas, these schools can't catch up to provide the things that private schools can have.

I have parents that will take their kids to Elmont, and fake addresses, or, take their kids to St. John's Prep or other schools, as opposed to parents that are staying in the local schools.

And we need those parents in the local schools because those are the parents who tend to be more active, they would be helpful to the PTA, they would be able to provide resources.

But because they see that the local schools are not comparable for a homeowner, if you come out to my -- you've been out, you've were at my community this weekend, Mr. Mayor.

Sorry I couldn't be there, but I had a

commitment to another church.

You know, the -- my -- it's not an impoverished community, as I said.

People are proud of their community, and they want their local schools to reflect that.

And, right now, most of my local schools don't reflect that because of the funding formulas that have been in place.

I hope that we can do more on the state level to continue this program, but I wanted to just phrase that as an overall issue, because I want to bring it back to the debacle that's happening at 109 at the end. But the Chancellor raised that can of worms, so I'll bring that up later.

But, I wanted to focus on mayoral control, and I believe there should be mayoral control.

And, you know, as a former school-board member, as a parent with two children that went through public school, you know, I understand the differences, and I understand having one point of our responsibility, and I think that's important.

My concern with mayoral control is that DOE has now become an overall oligarchy, in some ways, that there is not much -- there needs to be more opportunity for input. There needs to be more

opportunity to talk about policy changes. There needs to be more parental input, and especially with co-location.

The process for co-location with parental and community input is horrible.

The points of opportunity for parental or community input is not proper, and throughout the whole co-location process.

And I would hope that, you know, as part of mayoral control, we take a hard look at the transparency throughout that whole process.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Well, look, I appreciate that, Senator.

You and I have known each other a very long time, and have served together in the council.

I want to affirm to you, we have a disagreement, I think, on the evolution of the co-location process.

I think it was horrible. I think we 100 percent agree. And I think it has more work to be done, unquestionably.

And I'm not saying there aren't some examples where we -- since we came in, we got it right, and I'm sure we've made mistakes.

But I -- if you look at the whole city and

everything that's been moving, CECs have become stronger; much more membership, much more engagement with CECs.

PEP is an entirely different environment, where there's open dialogue and debate, and some things actually changed because of the open dialogue and debate.

What we're doing at the school level, as I said, on a potential co-location, we don't just send anybody. We send a deputy chancellor to go and meet with parents, walk through the building, and look at the potential ramifications.

These are points in time. We have a lot more to do.

Because -- I was a public school parent, as I said, until June. It's a pretty recent experience in my life.

The system won't work if parents are not fully engaged.

We're very proud more parents are coming to the parent-teacher conferences.

We're very proud of the contract, requires weekly engagement with parents and the teachers.

But, we're at a point in a progress.

So I would only argue to you, our goal is to

deepen the amount of parent involvement and input, but I can say to you, very personally, as the person ultimately responsible, if you or anyone else raises a concern to me, it's taken very seriously.

You know, the dialogue we had with Senator Felder earlier, those were real issues that our special-education parents are going through.

Real changes were made.

And I can go through a host of examples like that.

And I think Senator Montgomery's point is fair, that maybe you didn't see that in the previous administration.

I do understand that. I felt the same way often. But, I also have faith in democracy.

Democratic process led to leadership in our city that heard loud and clear, that parents wanted more voice in their schools, but also wanted effective and efficient and clean, you know, in every sense, schools.

So I think we're getting there on that front.

But I affirm to you, because it's to the point the Chairman made, if any member of this Committee ever says, "Here is a specific problem that I feel is not being addressed," even in an

individual schools, we take that very seriously. And I'm responsible for making sure there's that follow-up.

SENATOR COMRIE: There's no doubt that your office has been much more responsive. And as I said in the beginning, the Chancellor has been very responsive, and her staff.

I'm just still getting feedback from many parents around the system, that they don't feel that they have a positive impact on engaging the system, and creating policy, and raising issues, and getting real feedback from it.

And I think that that's something we can work on.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I also think, if I may interrupt, and I apologize, I think we are not doing a good enough job, at times, communicating to parents, both, some of the things we're doing, and some of the areas where we need their response, to figure out if we're getting it right.

I think that's an area where we have to improve.

But in the very tangible sense, whenever you hear that feedback about something specific, I welcome it, and I know the Chancellor does too,

because we want to improve that reality with the parents.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: And I think, also, to some degree, it's about communication, because I did do a town hall meeting, actually, in District 29, about two months ago, and it was standing room only.

But even in that audience, they asked the question as to, why don't we have a prep course for our students for the specialized schools?

And in the school that we were having the town hall meeting, there is a prep course. But, they have to go after school, they have to go on Saturdays.

So a lot of the changes that we made also require some parent responsibility.

So we can offer things, but if parents don't take advantage of them, then that's not going to help.

And the other thing that you and I have discussed in the past, and we came at it from two different points of view, was August Martin, and there was a lot of negativity.

This school, going into next year, has an increase in enrollment, because we did everything:

renewal school, new principal.

We had that discussion, and, actually, has now become a focus that other people want to be into.

So I think it's, you know, some things we're trying that are new. Some things will work; some won't always work.

But I think having the open dialogue and being able to talk to each other, is the most important thing.

SENATOR COMRIE: No, I've appreciated your open dialogue.

And, again, I'm not targeting this to just you.

You -- again, your office, has been helpful, and your office has been responsive, but there's still some things that can be corrected.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Absolutely.

SENATOR COMRIE: Opportunities to ensure that the parents feel that they can engage.

My parents have some of the longest commute times in the city, or, as it is.

So, hearing that they have to take their child on a Saturday to a program, when they would prefer to do it after school, for a -- you know, the

engagement programs, so that they can get the specialized high school tests, would probably be more palatable to parents, because then they know that their child is in school until 6:00, which would be better for them with a long commute time anyway.

So that's why, when you heard the groaning at the meeting on about Saturdays, it's another day that a parent has to, you know, take their child.

But just to stay on the mayoral control, before I grouse about 109, the -- the MWBE vendor opportunities under mayoral control, and how that is done.

And I would hope that there would be a quarterly list of the projects that were let, and the opportunities that were given to MWBE, so that they can come and have more people that are desiring to be vendors, that feel that the system difficult for them to navigate.

I know it's easier than it was, because I looked at the website recently, but it's still a problem for people to access.

And I would hope that there are more vendor hearings or vendor -- pre-vendor opportunities so that they could discuss that.

Just the other --

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Just a quick comment on that?

So, about 1.6 billion in MWBE contracts in the last year.

The goal is 16 billion over 10 years.

DOE was not part of any mayoral vision around MWBE in the previous administration.

We now include DOE in our goals, to hold them to that high standards we're holding everybody else to.

But there's no question, again, there's a communication area we must do much better.

We have a lot of opportunities people are not hearing about, and we're trying to fix that rapidly.

We're trying to make the certification process much easier. And Commissioner Greg Bishop at Small Business Services is responsible for that, I think has done a lot to improve that situation.

SENATOR COMRIE: He's a great commissioner, by the way.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: We're very proud.

And -- but so the point is, this is an area where I want to fully say, I'm not satisfied that we are yet certifying as many people as we can, and

making as many opportunities as clear as they can.

But I know the will is there, and the entire -- I've met, literally, with all my commissioners to tell them this is mission-critical to improve the situation.

SENATOR COMRIE: Well, the vendors have heard your desire to go to 16 billion, so you're getting more people excited about it. And the easier the system is accessible, and pre-vendor conferences, would make that a lot better, also.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Thank you.

SENATOR COMRIE: I just want to applaud you for getting that done, and also share with you the frustrations that they're having with accessing the system.

So -- but I think it's a great program.

Just, you know, going back to the policy-making issue, again, I think that if there are opportunities on a regular basis for parents and other interested parties to have public input on policy and agendas, I think it would be helpful to the entire system as well.

And I hope that we can continue to see more of that.

Finally, I do have to, you know, bring up

109, because the Chancellor mentioned it to Senator Golden, and co-location.

There's a big problem, when you have a school that already has a predetermined outcome before the parents can get involved.

And, unfortunately, as you laid out earlier, the typical co-location process was not followed here, because applications was sent out to the -- to prospective parents to -- for their children to apply, before there was a PEP vote.

And the PEP vote was scheduled for last month, due to my intervention and Council Member Garodnick.

You know, it still hasn't happened yet.

But when you have a school that has gone through a principal change, which destabilizes a school, which hired a principal that was a former student at the school, but then has just suffered because they had a problem with a student that committed suicide at the school, and still destabilized the school.

And then a larger problem, where they have not had a capital upgrade, other than (indiscernible) money in the building, for 18 years, you know, it makes it difficult for the school to

get stabilized.

Now they're going to face a co-location, you know, when you have a population there, where you're going to put a high school with a junior-high school, it's just not fair to the school.

And the process, as you laid out, was not properly followed in this respect.

You know, I understand the need to try to accommodate the surge of charters that are trying to apply to become schools. But, we also have to consider the needs of a community that's undergoing a rebuilding process in a community that is exploding in population as well, changing in their socioeconomic status and their cultural status.

The children that are attending that school tend to be undersized, because they're coming from communities that their children tend to be smaller in stature, and they're going to have to now worry about high school children coming in there.

And, the whole process of a school being told that they now have to put up with a charter school coming into their building, when they're now being promised resources for the charter school, where the children in the charter school are going to be treated in a different class and in a different way

than these schools, is going to create a "Tale of Two Cities" in the school.

And I know that you don't necessarily believe that, but I can tell you that, from the other issues with charter co-location, it creates a problem. And the self-esteem issue for children when they're in middle school, middle school kids are crazy anyway. They're going hormonal, they're going through changes, they're going through a reclamation of the school.

And now we're dealing with the fact that a charter school is being dropped on them without them having an opportunity to impact it.

And, you know, I have a problem with the co-location process, because the opportunities for parents to ask questions are done at the -- an unofficial hearing; not the official hearing.

They're not -- and get answers to their questions are done at the unofficial hearing.

The official hearing, parents can only make statements. And there are -- people that are there that they're not familiar with, other than the superintendent, that has to listen to the questions. There's no opportunity for discourse or debate.

And, also, when it gets to the next level,

there are no opportunity for parents to have discourse or debate.

So I think that that's a major problem with the co-location process, and I think that that's something that needs to be adjusted under mayoral control as well.

But I would appeal to you that the situation at 109 is not fair to the self-esteem of those students, it's not fair to the rehabilitation of the school.

It's the school that, given the opportunity, could be a shining-star middle school, with a high -- high-performing students and services, if it were given.

But it hasn't been given that opportunity.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Well, as you know, we forestalled the vote. We've been talking to the CEC members. We have been meeting with all the constituents, including the superintendent. And, the vote will be taking place this month.

That doesn't -- you know, we don't know the outcome. That's what a vote is all about.

But most importantly, we have highlighted that school. It's an arts-focused school. I understand that it's going to continue to be an

arts-focused school.

But, I do want to say that, at no point did the parents think that that -- that the students who might apply to the charter, were not told they were specifically going to be in any one place.

And, to say that the new-visions charters, because this is a new-vision school, has, in general, been very good partners, and have brought things to the table in a co-location. Something that has to be said.

But at this point it's still being discussed. It is being discussed with the communities, and we should have a decision at the PEP meeting.

And, again, hopefully, there will be something that will work well for everyone.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I just want to -- first all of all, I appreciate you raising it, because we want to look at every single situation and see if we're doing it right.

And, again, I know you a long time and I know you're speaking from the heart.

But I want to affirm to you that, when we engage parents -- and, first of all, parents are not a monolith. I can say, from going back to my PTA meetings and school-board meetings, parents have

different views.

But we make a very concerted effort to engage parents and hear what their concerns are, and we also try and bring to bear what we think is the best educational approach and trying to mix all the needs.

But, CEC is a part of it, PEP is a part of it, there's a lot of different milestones along the way.

So, we're certainly going to take your concerns and go back and discuss them, and see how we can be responsive.

But I do think, and I've monitored this pretty closely, in two years' time, we now have a process, in a typical situation -- maybe not every situation is equal or perfect -- but a typical situation, where there is earlier engagement with parents about potential changes, there is higher-level engagement; meaning, literally, to the point of a deputy chancellor participating with the parents. There is much more engagement from CECs. There's a much more open debate at the PEP.

I'm not gonna, you know, debate, chapter and verse, each of the specific points you raised.

I'm gonna say that I think this is a very

different reality, and it's in process; meaning, we expect to go deeper.

So I guess I want to defend the fact that a lot of people have worked hard to turn this supertanker and move it towards more meaningful parent engagement.

That doesn't mean parents always agree with each other. It doesn't mean we always agree with the parents. And we, ultimately, have to make the decision we think is best for the children.

But, we will go back and make sure that if there's other issues to address here, that we address them.

SENATOR COMRIE: Well, there are issues.

And, again, as I said in the beginning, this particular case did not follow your optimum process.

And, you know, when -- when parents see applications for a charter school in the school that they were in, because that's how it was presented, it just destabilizes the school.

And regardless of what -- you know, regardless of anything else, that school is in a need for stabilization. And it could be an excellent junior high school, because the community needs it.

There's the other two junior high schools near it, are over 130 percent overcrowded. There's no need for that to even happen.

And I think that we need to take a good, hard look at it.

I've spoken to the Chancellor and the Deputy Chancellor. We've been arguing vehemently about it.

And I hope that we can continue to argue about it before the PEP meeting.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Thank you.

SENATOR COMRIE: Thank you.

And, again, I support mayor control; I think it should happen.

I think it should happen within the term, and six months after the term, of the mayor, just in case we get a mayor that's not as amenable and someone that I would want to see reelected, as of yourself.

I'll just put that in at the end.

I don't know if that's proper, but I did it anyway.

Thank you.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

Senator Perkins.

SENATOR PERKINS: Thank you.

It's good to see you.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Senator, just one second.

Just to your inform you --

SENATOR PERKINS: Take your time.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: No, I'm not gonna -- I'm going to be a little quick.

-- we have two more questioners, so I'm just holding off on a potty-break.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I accept.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I will stay strong, Senator.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Well, no, if you -- never mind.

Senator Perkins.

I'm sorry, Bill. Go ahead.

SENATOR PERKINS: There's a break that somebody needs to take?

SENATOR MARCELLINO: No. No, no, no.

Go ahead.

SENATOR PERKINS: So, good to see you, and thank you for your time you're sharing with us.

Mayoral control was perceived as mayoral dictatorship when it was proposed, because of some

of what you're talking about today, which is that the mayor could come in and just decide to implement whatever programs and policies within those schools, that, in the past, might have had to go through some other networks of community-based school boards and representatives.

So there was a little bit of a (indiscernible) at that time to create some democracy, and there was an outcry on the part of the community because they were alienated from the schools, they were alienated from the system.

And, so, that's how we got to that point.

So, now, clearly, obviously, you're not a dictator, and from -- from that perspective, but, for instance, the charters are still in play in a way that appears to be as if they're given some sort of preferential treatment.

And so, I don't know if, in fact, that's the case, but -- but what is the status of the charter movement now these days?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Well, I don't think there's any preferential treatment, and I think there's equal treatment, which, to me, means this:

I have described the charter movement as a multifaceted movement.

There are very small grassroots charters.

There are big charter networks.

There are charter schools that go out of their way to serve English-language learners and kids with special needs.

There are charters that, bluntly, go out of their way to avoid serving some of those kids.

There are charters that, once they accept a child, keep them all the way through regardless of how well the child's doing.

There are other charters that I think wrongly try and remove children who don't test well.

So, it is a diverse movement.

But what we've said from the beginning is, we will work with charter schools, we will work with religious schools, we will work with the whole spectrum, to educate our children in our city, but what we will do is hold some standards.

Now, I want to use the example of pre-K, where we worked with Catholic schools, Jewish schools, Muslim schools, charter schools, all in common cause, and we're able to do great things across the board.

That's what I'd like to see happen consistently, what the Chancellor has done, which is

going and working with charter schools that want to work with district schools, sharing both best practices, both ways. We will do that.

But on questions of space, for example, we have clear standards.

There are situations, you'll remember in 2014, where requests were made of us that we don't think are educationally-sound sometimes. We will not agree to something that we don't think is educationally-sound. We won't agree to something we don't think the space is sufficient in terms of the preexisting school.

Where we can accommodate a charter school, and we think it's appropriate, we of course will.

So I think it's, we call them as we see them, and it's a system based on fairness.

But, I think charter schools, like every other part of the educational lineup, have a role to play, but we're going to hold them to clear standards.

SENATOR PERKINS: So how much money is there -- is in the budget for charters?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Okay. This -- this is for the upcoming budget?

Yeah. 1.7 billion for -- for next fiscal, it

is 1.7 billion.

SENATOR PERKINS: And do you have the -- some idea of enrollment?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: The enrollment right now, I'm going to test this and see --

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: They're about 10 percent of the --

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: It's on the road to 10 -- is it on the road to 10 --

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: -- no the road -- no, it's about 8-point-something.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Yeah.

So, 104,000 kids out of, right now, we're over 1.1 million.

So, closing in on 10 percent, not quite there yet.

SENATOR PERKINS: The concern about the --

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: And could I interrupt, please, Senator?

Just one other fact that I've been handily handed, which is, again, this is spending required by state law, so we're fulfilling our requirements under state law.

SENATOR PERKINS: So did you -- so -- again, did you indicate how much money is in the -- did you

say 1.7 billion --

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: 1.7 billion for 104,00 kids.

SENATOR PERKINS: And how many schools is that?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Individual school units? That is a good question.

We will -- people will be working on that as we speak -- unless they actually have it that quickly.

SENATOR PERKINS: Ooh, very good, very good.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Karen, you should become mayor, I just think you're that good.

205 individual schools.

SENATOR PERKINS: Okay.

So, now, in your -- in your remarks, you indicate that the new work with the charter, in terms of some of what they do that you can apply to regular public schools.

Apparently, that's why, in addition to all our efforts to lift up our public school children, we have partnered with dozens of charters.

But what are you -- in that partnership, what did you come up with?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Well, I -- so, a

couple of points.

I know the Chancellor has a lot to say on this too.

Look, we said -- we obviously have a difference from the previous administration on this topic.

We said, we want a real partnership --

SENATOR PERKINS: The "previous administration" being the Bloomberg Administration?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Correct.

We said, we want a relationship in which it's acknowledged that sometimes a district school is the place where the innovation occurs, and sometimes the charter school is the place that needs to learn from a district school, and vice versa.

We said that there had to be clear and consistent standards about admissions and retention of kids, and especially focusing on English-language learners and special-ed kids and kids who don't test so well.

So we've applied a set of standards that did not exist before, as you well know.

But at the same time, we said, you know, look, if you're acknowledging these standards that we hold for our own district schools, to me this is

a fairness and consistency matter.

We would never say a district school, a traditional pubic school, could reject a child because they don't test well; could reject a child because they have a special-education reality, or because they're English-language learners.

So we're saying, one standard for everyone.

If you meet that standard, if you want to be collegial with us and share practices both ways, we're absolutely ready to engage as partners and be supportive.

Now, many charter schools have been willing to do that. Some have not been willing to do that.

But pre-K is a great example.

We said, here's the -- here's the standard we need to meet for pre-K: the safety standards, the curricular standards. Are you willing to commit to that?

If you're willing to commit to that, let's do this together; the same as I said with the religious schools.

All but one charter institution was willing to agree to those rules, and has abided by them, and has helped us to expand pre-K the way we did.

SENATOR PERKINS: Which is that one, by the

way?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Well, that happens to be Success Academy, Senator.

SENATOR PERKINS: Is that Eva Moskowitz's?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: That would be, Senator.

Chancellor, would you like to add?

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Well, I think one of the things that the original charter law was meant to do, is to let charter schools innovate in ways that we could learn from.

What could they do differently than us, and how do we adopt that?

So one of the charter networks that we're working closely with is uncommon schools, because what we found, is that the training that many of their principals and teachers go through, on feedback, was done particularly well.

So, we have partnered District 19 and District 23, by the superintendent's request -- and now I think 18 wants to be part of it -- how to give teacher feedback.

So we actually combined their -- some of their teachers and their principals with our teachers and our principals to learn how to do that

better.

And that's one example of their doing something that we thought we could learn from.

The other thing is, we invited, particularly stand-alone charters -- because, you know, there are network charters and there are independent charters -- to attend our principals' conferences.

After I visit certain charter schools, they'll say, you know we're very lonely.

I was one -- one on the peninsula, it's the only one of its kind.

So I suggested to that superintendent that she invite that principal to attend the monthly principals' conferences.

And -- because these are the kids that are going to play with each other in the playground. They're going to be in other places together.

So, we're trying to see where that makes more sense.

We've also opened a lot of our professional development for -- when we have the space available, for principals or teachers to come to it, from whether it's parochial or charter schools.

So our hope is to make it more unified.

We, also, although they're both charter and

non-charter, some of the schools are using some interesting ways.

One of the charter schools I went to was doing some interesting work with gender-specific classes: girls-only and boys-only.

So by looking and seeing what they're doing, and their results, we said, okay, maybe that might we worth something that we might do.

It's the same way that we gave birth to the idea of PROS, that the UFT has worked with us on, that, why not create our own little charter world, to some degree, within our world, where schools could see what they want to do differently, and how we'd support them.

So I think it's a two-way street.

I think, in many cases, what we do particularly well in our renewal schools, but is also in other schools, intervention services.

So they've come to a lot of intervention workshops; how to use the AIS services.

I think it's a two-way street when everybody comes to the table, with one goal in mind: what's best for kids?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Let me just, one clarification on the PROS schools, because I think

this is so important.

You know, this is something we came to agreement with the union on: that a school could vote -- the administrators and the teachers could vote -- to suspend union work rules, and to suspend DOE work rules, and create what they thought was the most effective environment, which includes changing the schedule, elongating the school day, you know, having activities and tutoring on weekends...whatever it might be.

That was district schools, traditional public schools, staking their claim to the ability to innovate and change in the modern dynamic and reach kids in the best way possible.

I think there has been a stereotype, that the only sources of innovation were charter schools.

And, we want to assert -- there are certainly some charter schools who have been innovative and we want to learn from them, but we also want to assert that a district school can be a source of innovation.

And that under the PROS program, which is now well over 100 schools, that we are taking traditional public schools and giving them an opportunity to go places they never went before, and

to become as modern and effective and innovative as possible.

So, when the Chancellor alluded to them, I wanted you to hear that, again, in the vein of a single standard, we're not saying to our district schools -- which are where the vast majority of our kids are being educated, and will be for the, you know, decades and decades and decades into the future -- we're not saying just stay where you are; we're saying, we want to see you do better, we want to see you innovate. We're trying to give you the freedom to do the kind of innovation you want to do.

SENATOR PERKINS: So your -- I guess, from your point of view, the charter schools, for the most part, have been successful as models for what --

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Well, let me give you some facts.

First of all, again --

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Excuse me.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: -- I affirm strongly I want --

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Excuse me.

Before we go off to long on charter schools, this is not a hearing on charter schools.

This is a hearing mayoral control.

SENATOR PERKINS: Right, but --

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Can we --

SENATOR PERKINS: -- mayoral control, if I may interrupt, is a Bloomberg invention, and the first thing you did with it was create charter schools in my district.

So, I'm familiar with the whole --

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Then go argue with Mayor Bloomberg.

But this is, Mayor de Blasio, and we're talking about mayoral control.

SENATOR PERKINS: I know, that's why I'm asking, because he's the Mayor, and --

SENATOR MARCELLINO: All I'm suggesting is, we've got a long day ahead of us, there's a lot of speakers waiting to come up, and there's two more of your colleagues that are waiting to be heard too.

Can we focus on mayoral control of the New York City Schools?

SENATOR PERKINS: That's why I was asking him, what have we learned from the charter schools under --

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: So what I say, I want to pull it to both of your points, and,

Mr. Chairman, I believe mayoral control has allowed us to create a dynamic that is fair and consistent, because we've said that all of these schools, you know, we have oversight responsibility for religious schools. And, again, we have found them to be partners in pre-K, partners in after-school programs.

We're trying to create a high standard across all of eduction in the city, because every single child, it doesn't matter what school they graduate from, they're going to be part of the fabric of life in the city.

What we've said with charters, which is different from the previous administration, so, our version of mayoral control, based on the votes of the people in the election, is we're going to hold you to a standard.

If you meet that standard, we're very happy to work with you.

If you don't meet that standard, there's going to be times when we can't work together.

But, to the fact about performance, it is a very diverse movement. We've seen some charters that performed very well while being inclusive. We're seeing some charters that have performed well

while not being inclusive, which we don't accept.

SENATOR PERKINS: Can I ask you a question on that?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Please.

SENATOR PERKINS: What is "inclusive" and "not inclusive" in this --

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Meaning, if you -- I'm going to use the easiest example.

If you reflect the district, you're in, in terms of special-ed kids, in terms of English-language learners, in terms of retention of any child that you accept into the program.

So, there are some charters that do all those things, just like we would as a district school, and, manage to get good results.

There are some that do those things, don't get good results.

There are some that are exclusive and get good results, and we don't find that acceptable.

There are some that are exclusive that don't get good results.

It's a diverse movement.

But what can I tell you, overall, for the city of New York, here is an interesting fact that does not get enough attention:

The last standardized test -- you know I believe in multiple measures. I'm not trying to say standardized tests are the only way to look at things, but they are one measure.

District schools outperform charters in New York City in the last testing from last year, in terms of ELA. And charter schools outperform district schools in terms of math.

So, it was a split-decision.

But what we do know is, different even within that, is the difference was, the district schools always have to accept all comers. They could not turn away.

We would never -- ideologically, philosophically, morally -- never turn away a special-ed kid, we would never turn away a kid who didn't take a test well.

Sadly, some charters did.

So it's not a perfect scale.

But even by that imperfect scale, you don't see, you know, the kind of slanted outcome, I think, most people would assume from what they read in the papers.

SENATOR PERKINS: So why are charters allowed to careen?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Well, again, what I would say --

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Oh, come on!

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: -- and I'll be very quick on this --

SENATOR PERKINS: No, he just said that they don't accept the same -- all the same -- all the students --

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: -- I think that that's a very serious area of concern --

SENATOR PERKINS: But --

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: -- no, look, I'll just answer it quickly.

SENATOR PERKINS: -- yeah, why are you answering it for him?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: -- I think it's a serious area of concern, Senator.

I know there have been discussions about state legislation that would address that matter.

I think that's a very worthy pursuit.

Within the state law, we address it in all the ways we can, and that's what I've talked about in terms of the standards we've set, where we say no, in certain situations, where we feel that there's not been inclusivity.

But the better solution, the more universal solution, would be to act on this via state law.

SENATOR PERKINS: Do you recommend charter schools?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I'm sorry, I don't understand the question.

SENATOR PERKINS: I'm trying to understand, is it your position that charter schools are the right way to go in terms of public education?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I would say it differently, and, honestly, Senator, I -- my job is to make sure, of course, that all kids are served.

That is our responsibility.

But the core of New York City education is traditional public schools, and will be for as long as I'm alive.

And, I have a very personal experience with traditional public schools, and that's where most of my constituents send their kids, and I have to get that system to work better; but at the same time, I'm going to work with the other types of schools.

So it's not recommend or don't recommend.

I care about everyone.

I care about every child.

I know the Chancellor cares deeply about

every child.

But the first thing we have to fix and improve is where the vast majority of kids are, which is our traditional public schools.

SENATOR PERKINS: If I may, just -- just one last question?

So, now, do you keep the demographic data on the charter schools' population?

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I want to carefully answer in the sense that, yes, to some extent.

I don't know how perfect it is, but we can give you what we have.

SENATOR PERKINS: Thank you.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Thank you, Senator.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Senator Sanders.

SENATOR SANDERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm sure that this has been a long hearing for you, and it's just beginning, so I will respect your position and I will not ask this board about -- or, this body, rather, about diplomas and certificates for special-ed kids; bullying; the testing.

I will focus on the mission ahead, what we set out to do.

Let me first say that I am a former

school-board president in District 27, where we raised the academic achievement every year that I was there.

So I have a different view on school boards, and whether there should be, or whether we should have mayoral control.

I feel that the problems of democracy are best served by more democracy, and not less.

So I am aghast that New York City is the only city in the state that does not have a school board.

But I, too, would have to go on the record and say that I think that a one-year extension is unsatisfactory; that whether you agree with the system or not, the basic justice of a one-year, there's not much you can do in that, except to prepare to come back for the next year to plead for more time.

So that's an inappropriate amount of time, and we can argue seven years, but we certainly should not submit the Mayor to, or, the city, for that matter, to a one-year extension.

We should add a real extension, where they would have a chance to test their philosophy, and we have a chance to grade them.

One year does not do justice to anyone.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Thank you, Senator.

SENATOR SANDERS: Well, I appreciate that.

Perhaps it's because you prayed for me on Sunday.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I did.

SENATOR SANDERS: But that's -- well, I don't know if the prayers are being answered or the angels are speaking, but whatever it is, I will say that I am watching how New York City is treated.

I want it to be treated fairly.

If the previous mayor had seven or eight years, then that should be a standard; or, we should come up with a real standard and say, Here is what it will be from now on for every mayor. Regardless whether we like a future mayor or not, this would be the standard.

I'm concerned about mayoral control, because I'm hearing a lot from parents who feel that their voices are not getting through, that they're not hear -- that no one is really hearing from them. That they -- they are allowed to speak, but nothing changes.

I do believe that, Bill Clinton seems to come to mind right around now, where he spoke of "Mend it, don't end it."

And if I had -- were here years ago, I would have said that about the school board.

However, I'm here now about mayoral control, and under those conditions: Mend it, don't end it.

I'm working on, along with many of my colleagues, some very interesting ideas that may allow more parent participation.

And I -- our Ranker on this one is -- absolutely has all of this information, and I would encourage you to reach out to him, to see some of our ideas of bringing more parent participation in the mayoral-control arena.

You still have mayoral control, but there would be another avenue for parents to participate.

And since the day is long, and I don't mind you answering those other points that I raised, I will stop there, and respect the Chair.

Mr. Chair, on another day I want some more time.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Just one quick answer, Senator. Thank you.

And I do want you to know, again, we don't consider the mission done on parental involvement. We consider the mission begun.

You can see in the CEC participation, you can

see in the parent-teacher-conference participation, there's real metrics that show there is something starting to move, and, including in the co-location process, something is starting to move.

Much more to be done.

And what we ask of you is partnership.

When you identify someplace where we are not doing well enough in hearing parent voices, we want to do better.

I will also say, again, parents can disagree; there can be different sides among parents. And sometimes we can hear people -- fully hear them, and say, we come to a different conclusion with an absolute open heart.

But if you think there are areas we're falling down, in terms of engaging parents early and often to hear their concerns, we want to hear them identified so we can go right at them.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: And I just want to add that, I know District 27 very well. I've been out on the peninsula several times.

The Title I parent engagement in District 27 is particularly high. Queen McKeever (ph.), making sure that some of that happens.

But most importantly, I think one of the

things that mayoral control also brings is that, when I go visit, and, particularly, I say on the peninsula, and I mean that there are other city agencies that should be involved, because there's a particular need out on the peninsula. A lot more homeless kids that come to the peninsula, and then get sent back to The Bronx, or wherever.

I'm able to go back to my office and call heads of other agencies and I say, How do we work on this together?

And that's something that I think, if you're not dealing with it, from chancellor to, let's's say, Homeless Services or Temporary Housing, you don't have that communication.

So having the ability to do that at that level I think is very important, particularly in high-need areas.

I just met with your superintendent, Mary Barton. There are certain things I know that area needs that may not be relevant to other areas, but, I can then leverage that support.

We're talking, particularly, working with the new Y out there, because there's a special service that you need. You're -- the drug issue is coming up high.

I think mayoral control allows you to work with intercity agencies in ways that you can't do if you're a stand-alone school board, or you don't know who all the other players are.

SENATOR SANDERS: Thank you.

Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you, Senator.

Senator Murphy.

SENATOR MURPHY: Well, thank you, Chairman.

Mayor, Chancellor, very nice to meet you today.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Thank you, Senator.

SENATOR MURPHY: I'm Senator Murphy from the 47th District. I represent Westchester County and Dutchess County and, of course, you know, Putnam County.

In Putnam County and Westchester, which I represent, the -- our school system faces a formula which puts us at a regional cost index beneath New York City, even though the federal Bureau of Education Labor Statistics put us at a par with New York City's cost of living.

Many people say this is -- unfairly short-changes our schools because of New York City's

expense.

Include -- but we have Peekskill School District which is really getting hurt.

How -- not necessarily to you, Mr. Mayor, but maybe the Chancellor could add: How do we fix this?

Because sometimes Westchester and Putnam gets put in, and sometimes Westchester and Putnam get thrown out.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Well, I'd like to --

SENATOR MURPHY: So it's a major concern for me, and my district, and the people that I represent.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: -- I'd like to start, because I do think it's a question that has to do with the public process, the political process.

Look, I believe that many school districts in the state did not get the support they deserve.

And I believe that's what the campaign for fiscal equity, a case almost a decade ago, proved, decided by the Court of Appeals, our highest court, and it was to benefit jurisdictions all over the state; in the North Country, in some of the big cities upstate, as well as New York City.

So, I think there's a bigger approach that has to be taken here to make sure that any district

in need is getting more support.

And I can't think of a better investment for the state of New York.

I don't -- I honestly do not believe, Senator, it is, you know, an us-versus-them situation.

I believe this whole state rises and falls together.

I believe everyone in this state has an interest in New York City having a good educational system and a strong economy and a strong workforce, that's having a great benefit for the whole state.

But I want to see cities and towns and counties all over the state do well with their education too.

If we're going to have a thriving statewide economy, we need that.

So I would argue that, in fact, education support across the state is one of the worthiest investments.

If you follow the pattern of CFE, is one example.

It would mean greater investment in a number of areas of the state.

SENATOR MURPHY: I -- I absolutely get that,

and it's a big concern in my district, and because you have, like I said, Peekskill, and then you have a community like Bedford that has Mount Kisco that comes into.

So it's that they're $8.8 million short; and, yet, it's a -- quote/unquote, above average.

But, one quick question.

And then I know, thank you for your diligence in being here for the number of hours.

-- but, Mr. Mayor, this is to you.

Convince me.

Convince me why I should vote for mayoral control.

With all the allegations that are going on in your office and your administration, why I should vote for mayoral control; and why I can trust you to make sure that we give the 1.1 million kids in New York City the opportunity to succeed, and make sure that the $9 billion gets spread out evenly.

Let me know.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Senator, thank you.

Senator, first of all, I would point to facts.

Graduation rate over 70 percent for the first time in New York City.

68,000 kids in pre-K full day --

And thank you to all the members of the Legislature for support for that.

-- versus 20,000 a few years ago when I came into office.

The fact that we are devoting ourselves to a plan to get all kids on a grade-level reading at third-grade level by the next 10 years.

I mean, these are major changes in the way we approach education. They're only possible under a mayoral-control system.

I mentioned our Computer Science For All initiative, which is generating such excitement at the grassroots, but also in the private sector of our city, because it means we'll have a more educated workforce for the future.

That never could have been achieved without a mayoral-control system.

So I would say, look at what's been achieved already: Higher graduation rate. Higher test scores. Pre-K. After-school for all our middle school kids. And, also, I have reforms in terms of things like computer science that did not exist before.

Those prove real achievement, and that alone

would be a reason, I think, to support a renewal of mayoral control.

But I would argue, also, that, obviously I know you are held to the same standard in public life.

We're going to hear all sorts of allegations over the years; all of us.

And in a democracy, we don't judge by allegations. We judge by facts and through due process.

What we know has happened in our schools, we know for a fact it's proven, it's objective.

We know there's support for mayoral control across the ideological spectrum.

We know our business community in New York City, people -- including people who don't always agree with me on a number of issues, are amongst the strongest supporters of mayoral control.

And, we know that voices, as disparate as Mayor Bloomberg and Mayor Giuliani and I, share a view that this is the only governing system that works, and we, literally, don't know of any alternative that would work without what we saw in the past, which was inefficiency, inability to reform, and, bluntly, a lot of corruption.

So, I'm going to argue to you, that between track record and vision, and the fact that there is no better system, and this one really has bipartisan support, that this is the way to go.

SENATOR MURPHY: There's one thing you forgot, and that's the trust factor, and that's for the public; for all of the public to trust us public officials to do the right thing.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Uh-huh.

SENATOR MURPHY: And so that's very, very important, and that should be at the high top --

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Well, and the public -- I agree with you, and I would express it this way, and I'm a former public school parent, as I mentioned:

The public trusts actual results that change their lives.

You can talk to those parents of the 68,500 kids in pre-K, fully, almost 50,000 more kids in pre-K than just a few years ago.

What does it mean for their lives they got that?

What does it mean for folks who have a kid in after-school who they couldn't get a seat before?

This is what we are charged with doing:

Honorably and consistently providing real good results and real change for our constituents.

That's how we should be judged.

SENATOR MURPHY: I will agree with you on that.

I have a 13-year-old, 12-year-old, and 5 years.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: God bless you.

SENATOR MURPHY: I'm in the middle out there.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: That's a (indiscernible) in life, may I say, as your fellow parent.

SENATOR MURPHY: We are busy, as you know.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I wish you perseverance.

SENATOR MURPHY: Well, you know, sometimes it's -- I got a good egg at home that takes care of the kids while I'm up here.

But, you know, it's one of those things that, it is our obligation to make sure all these kids are educated. I get that.

But it's also the trust factor that also needs to be put out there too.

With that being said:

I thank you for your diligence.

I thank you for your time here in answering the questions.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Thank you.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

I appreciate that.

I just have to make one point vis-a-vis the discussion we had with Senator Perkins, relative to charter schools, and the like.

The way this -- this hearing was designed to talk about mayoral control; not charter schools versus public schools.

The claims, Chancellor, are you aware of any action taken against charter schools for denying admission -- improperly denying admission of students?

Because it's been, the charter schools always claim, and what I've observed, their admission is through a lottery.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Yes, I think what has been in the papers has been parents who, individually, found certain actions in certain schools objectionable.

So there are parents who are actually bringing lawsuits against specific charters for inappropriate actions.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Usually because their kid didn't get in.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: No, because their kid is getting thrown out.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Yeah, if I may jump in for a quick second, Mr. Chair?

Look, I'll state the obvious:

We are obligated by state law to provide a certain amount of funding for charters, and, you know, live by a whole series of ground rules upon how we comport -- through which we comport ourselves with charters. And we'll continue to do that.

But I refer to some standards that we hold and we believe in, that whenever a decision is ours to make under state law, we do pay attention to these other factors, because we want to see -- for example, we know for a fact that there are instances where children were not allowed to continue in a certain charter school.

We want charter schools to live by the same standards as district schools.

If a child is accepted, work with that child the whole way through, just like we would have to.

You were a teacher. You obviously knew that if a kid came into your school, short of a major

disciplinary issue, which is a separate matter, but, if a kid was tough to teach, I know you buckled down and tried to find a way.

Well, I think, generalizing it, that's what every district school has to do.

We don't have an option of saying, wow, you're tougher to teach so we're not going to keep you.

So where we get to make our own decisions, that is an important issue for us.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

Appreciate your time, Mayor.

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Chancellor, we appreciate your time.

CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Thank you.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: And as we say in the old country, "May the 4th go with you."

MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Well done, Chairman.

Thank you.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: God bless you.

We're going to take a two-minute break.

And the next group of people can up: Joe Herrera, Derrell Bradford, and Ian Rowe.

(A recess was taken.)

(The hearing resumes.)

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Gentlemen, if you have written statements, I believe they've been submitted for the record; they'll be put in.

If you could just -- if you wish to make a statement individually, summarize what you have to say, so we can get to any questions that might be asked, and then we can move on.

Okay?

IAN ROWE: Sure, Senator.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Start with whomever you wish.

JOE HERRERA: (Microphone turned off.)

Well, good afternoon.

My name is Joe Herrera. I am an organizer and advocate from Coney Island, Brooklyn.

I have been a member of Families for Excellent Schools since 2013.

I would like to start by thanking the members of the Senate Education Committee for inviting me to share testimony today.

Hearings, like this one, where parents, community members, educators, and students have the opportunity to provide input about the governance of our school system are a welcomed opportunity to make

our voices heard.

The question of whether the Mayor should retain control of our school system is not one to be taken lightly.

(Microphone turned on.)

As a parent, I do believe that mayoral control is a policy that is a good thing for New York City's children.

It allows the mayor to directly manage the city's schools instead of turning over management to a politically-motivated school board.

Mayoral control brings with it a single vision, and when properly administered, it has the potential to allow major initiatives to roll out and be managed effectively, creating a better school system for all New York City's children.

However, as a father whose children attend public charter schools, I have been deeply disappointed by the approach of the current administration has taken when it comes to our public schools.

It is an unfortunate example of politics trumping policy, and a reminder why periodic reviews, such as this hearing, are so important.

The current administration has made no secret

of their philosophical opposition to charter schools.

It was made clear in the mayoral campaign.

After being sworn into office, one of the very first actions of this Administration was an attempt to deny charter school students access to their schools.

I was proud to be part of a group of parents who fought back on behalf of these students.

And though we were able to save those schools, the Mayor had sent a clear message to our public school parents about how his administration views our right to choose the best public schools for our children.

The current Administration has opposed a growth of public charter schools despite the overwhelming parent demand.

Administratively, they have hindered charter schools' day-to-day operations.

And what should be a productive relationship, with real choices for New York City parents, has, instead, been one of division and unnecessary strife.

Mayoral control is an opportunity for the Administration to leave its mark on the future of

millions of New York City children.

It is a tremendous responsibility.

And while I support mayoral control, we must ensure that mayors treat and support all public schools equally, and that includes public charter schools.

The Legislature can help do this by ensuring that the laws and policies adapted by the State are being implemented appropriately and without unreasonable bias.

My daughter's traditional public school and my son's public charter school deserve a system and a mayor who is equally dedicated to their success.

Once again, I would just like to thank the members of the Committee for hearing my testimony today.

I hope you will consider it carefully as you make decisions that affect all public school children in New York City.

Thank you.

IAN ROWE: Good afternoon.

My name is Ian Rowe, and I also thank the Committee for allowing me the opportunity to speak at this hearing.

I'm a product, a proud product, of the

New York City Public School System.

I'm also the CEO of Public Prep, which is a non-profit network of single-sex public schools that now serve more than 1500 students across New York, from pre-K through eighth grade.

Public Prep consists now of six campuses, including Girls Prep Lower East Side, the first all-girls public charter school in New York City, and Boys Prep Bronx Elementary, the first and only all-boys public elementary school in The Bronx.

Our philosophy is to start early with the end in mind: to put all of our students, especially New York City's highest-needs scholars, on a path to college completion.

Our curriculum is designed to ensure our students attain high levels of achievements across academic subjects, such as the arts, history, music, math, science, and literacy, while also helping our students develop the character skills, like, persistence and determination, and core values of responsibility, merit, and scholarship, that we know are so important to overcome the inevitable hurdles to get to and through college.

Though we serve students across New York City, we take particular pride in serving students

in the South Bronx where we're focusing all of our future growth.

We just finished our random lottery process for the 2016-17 school year.

We had 2,319 applications for less than 100 open seats at Girls Prep Bronx, and exactly 1,000 applications for fewer than 75 open seats at Boys Prep Bronx.

It is bittersweet to have to tell more than 3,000 families in the South Bronx that the best we can do is to put their sons and daughters on an excruciatingly long wait list; especially, when all those families are asking for is the opportunity to send their children to a great public school.

I felt compelled to be here this afternoon to speak on behalf of all these families desperate for a good education, as well as the more than 100,000 children in New York City who attend public charter schools.

As a school-network leader, I support the concept of mayoral control in New York City, and I believe it should continue.

Under strong mayoral leadership, this is a far more effective way to run a school system than the previous system of school-board control. It

empowers the mayor to marshal the resources of the City to serve the city students.

However, as an educator, I do have concerns about what mayoral control has meant for public school students under the current Administration.

Public Prep has, on several occasions, supported the Mayor's education agenda.

We have sought a collaborative relationship with the Administration; not a combative one.

When the Mayor announced his two signature education initiatives, which he spoke about frequently at this hearing, universal pre-K and dramatic expansion of after-school programs, we were thrilled.

These were exactly the types of ideas, to start early and extend learning time, which are very aligned to how we believe we can help students achieve their highest potential.

But when Public Prep applied for both pre-K and after-school, we learned that every type of public school was allowed to participate save one: public charter schools.

For some reason, the Administration decided public charter schools shouldn't even get the chance.

While public charter schools, ultimately, won an exhausting and time-consuming battle to be allowed to offer UPK programming and to receive funding for after-school, the question is: Why did we have to face that battle at all?

We are public schools serving public school students.

Public charter schools have consistently faced an uphill climb to be treated the same as other public schools in New York City, and have often been demonized by the Mayor and the leadership of the city's Department of Education.

Public Prep and other public charter schools stand ready to work with the Mayor to overcome the massive challenge we all face to provide a high-quality education for the children of New York City.

At Public Prep we have more than 300 incredibly talented team members who have committed their life to improving education outcomes for kids.

We want to help.

Mayoral control can be a tool to allow us all to work together and do our level-best.

But a divisive approach stymies any real

opportunity for true systemwide partnership and cooperation between the Administration and the city's public charter schools.

At the end of the day, the individuals who suffer most are our students, and their families that have the highest aspirations for them.

It is for those reasons that I believe hearings like this, where state leaders hear from educators and parents --

Many of whom we have behind us. Thank you.

-- while they evaluate the-- while you evaluate the Mayor's leadership of our school system are so crucial.

The opportunity to lead the city's school system is a privilege; not a right.

And any mayor, whether we were speaking of the current Administration or future administrations, must earn that privilege.

In order to do that, the mayor must represent the interests of all children in New York City and empower all parents, regardless of race, income level, or ZIP code, to have the power to choose a great public school, including public charter schools, for their child.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to

speak at the hearing.

DERRELL BRADFORD: Chairman Marcellino, Senator Latimer, Senator Krueger, I'd like to thank you all for staying. This is a long day.

I have two points that echo much of what was said earlier, and then just two more flourishes I'd like to add.

The first one, and I think we heard it a lot earlier, and I just want to borrow from Winston Churchill, is that, you know: Mayoral control is the worst form of governance but for all the others.

When you consider what we had before, this has created a tremendous opportunity for an individual at the top to act with some speed and some urgency on a vision, whether or not we always agree with the vision.

And I think that's a dynamic in the schools that's worth protecting.

The second one I would just say is that, and the Mayor said it himself earlier, the single point of accountability is crucial, and, to me, actually creates dual-governance.

Because you are charged with renewing mayoral control, there is a point of contact for you as

legislators, particularly when you talk about the fact that the rest of the state sends such a large sum of money to New York City for its public schools.

But then there is also the governance mechanism of elections.

There are people who will -- can decide whether or not they like the direction the mayor is going, on a myriad of issues, including schools, and they'll get a chance to do that every four years.

So those are my two things that echo what was said before.

The other two things would I just say is that, it feels like folks want to extend mayoral control, and the question really is, for how long?

And I would urge you all, despite the sort of subtle heckling of charter schools earlier, to look at charter-authorizing as a model for renewing mayoral control.

Normally, an authorizer decides it wants to give you more time and more space to be innovative if you have a proven track record, if you have a vision, if you have things under control.

If an authorizer does not feel like you have those things, they may intervene, or they may give

you a shorter amount of time, including one year, to prove that you deserve to continue to have the right to run a school; or, in this case, to run all of the schools.

So there's a powerful lesson there.

It has also helped us bring some of the best public schools in America into existence, particularly for low-income kids.

So I would just urge you to consult that one too.

And the last one I would say, just to sort of echo what Ian and my colleagues and others have said, is that the Mayor has a ton of power.

What he should not be able to do is supercede state law, particularly with regard to the governance of charter schools.

And, whenever you consolidate power in an individual, the thing I think you really want to do is disperse power through choice as a check against the individual doing the wrong thing, if you want to call it that.

So, mayoral control is sort of only as effective as a regular human being's ability to police it in the interim.

And charter schools and school choice had

been great vehicles for parents to vote with their feet, as the Mayor said earlier, on his vision, or on the vision of Mayor Bloomberg before him.

So I would just put those four things out there.

Again, it will be up to you to decide this.

I think most of my colleagues and folks who work on change, particularly in urban districts, think that mayoral control can be effective, but it's effectiveness is totally about the Mayor, and that's what I'm saying.

Thank you very much for having me.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Certainly.

Thank you for your testimony.

So just to put it clear in my mind: All three of you are in favor of extending and retaining mayoral control; it's just a matter of time -- length of time?

IAN ROWE: I think it actually does raise a very, I think, useful comparable, which is the authorization that we have to live under, to demonstrate that we have earned the right to continue to run charters, which is an authorization process, which, at maximum, is five years, but it can also be three or one year, depending on

demonstrated performance.

JOE HERRERA: I believe, truly believe, that we need a check to make sure that state law is being followed in regards to charter and quality-education opportunities for families in our communities.

And, I just want to ensure that the Mayor --

You know, my daughter goes to school with his son at Brooklyn Tech. My son goes to Coney Island Prep Charter School.

I just want every child and every parent to be empowered to choose what works best for their kids, and to have a mayor that's for all children; not 90 percent, but 100 percent, of our children.

And to -- and I think it's up to the Legislature to periodically just check on the Mayor and make sure that he's following policies adopted by the state law.

DERRELL BRADFORD: Yeah, Senator, just to that point, you know, mayoral control is -- seems to be the right fit for New York. It's not the right fit for every place.

And I do think that the prior model had everyone in charge, so no one was in charge.

And that the important checks against consolidating power in the mayor rests with you, and

should, ultimately, rest with families in terms of having more choices about where they send their children can go o school.

IAN ROWE: And I think one of the powers of state-authorization processes are, is that it's very clear what the performance metrics are that you need to hit on an ongoing basis, to preserve your opportunity, you know, preserve your right, to run schools.

And so even, for example, something like graduation rates, which we've certainly said multiple times, well, it's certainly a good thing if more kids are graduated from high school.

But if you compare that to the percent of kids entering the community college system that need remedial education, then that's not as clear -- a strong evidence of strong performance.

So, I would urge you to be really clear about, what are the performance metrics by which we would say you've earned the right to continue to have control?

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Senator Latimer.

SENATOR LANZA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I think some of my colleagues should have stuck around, because I think they might have had

more detailed questions for you.

As a suburban legislator, I don't have the same vantage point that some of them do about what's happened, so I'm going to ask some very general questions, some of the ones I asked to the Mayor before on the structure, and this is perhaps my ignorance.

How does the charter school community, the aggregate of it, interact below the level of mayor and chancellor with the system that's in place now?

In other words, the PEPs, the CECs; is there any point of interaction between the schools you represent and those structures that were created when mayoral control was created?

IAN ROWE: Yeah, we have a lot of interaction at multiple levels.

At the core level, at the school itself, our public charter schools, we work very, very hard to create very positive co-location relationships with our district schools. That can range from sharing dance programs, to professional development, and there are other things that we try to do at the school level, to make sure that we're all part of one larger community sharing a building.

So that's the first, I guess, primary

interaction.

In terms of CEC and PEP, every time there is a request for space, on either side, there's usually something called a "building utilization plan," or an "education impact statement," that has to be reviewed. Usually, there are hearings at the community education council. Those are typically approved, or not. And then they have to be, ultimately, voted on by the Mayor's PEP.

So, we've had a lot of interaction.

And, you know, we, again, generally try to follow the rules, and make this a productive interaction at every level.

DERRELL BRADFORD: Yeah, and I'm also on the board of a large network of charter schools that was talked about, but not talked about earlier.

And I would just say in two -- co-location is really like a first date: it can go very well or it can poorly.

But they don't all go poorly, which I think is sort of a myth that is perpetuated.

There are lots of schools that have amazing co-located relationships.

And it is also worth noting that the majority of co-locations are between district schools.

They're not between district and charter schools.

But it is worth noting that, like anything, it's about the people.

And there are some instances where things are going swimmingly, and some instances where things are going more -- where the going's more difficult.

SENATOR LANZA: So in the issue of co-locations, where, I gather, the two schools share the same physical plant, how common a practice is that, out of 100 percent of all locations that you have for charter schools?

How many of them wind up being co-located with the public schools?

Just so I understand how widespread it is, or isn't.

JOE HERRERA: Well, I just would like to point out that, you know, the majority of co-locations in New York City, who are actually traditional public schools. Right?

90 percent of co-locations in New York City are traditional public schools co-located with one another.

You rarely hear about that.

What you hear about in the news, or when you hear about, is when the charter schools co-locate.

And, again, this -- this -- this division happens at the co-lo -- you know, through community education councils, who are very -- most likely, most times, are very opposed to the co-location process when it comes to public charter schools, and very silenced when it comes to traditional public schools, in most cases.

And, again, just to make sure that there's equality and all voices are heard, you know, as a public charter school parent, I'm not able to serve on the community education council, because -- parent -- public charter school parents, unless they're -- they're -- I think the borough president appoints you, you cannot actually serve on a community education council.

So it's really a -- the voice of -- a missing voice in that process as well.

SENATOR LANZA: Is the experience that you're sharing equally spread out through the five boroughs? Or there are some places where it works better, some places where it works worst, based on geography, or demography?

IAN ROWE: I would say it's building -- building to building.

OFF-CAMERA SPEAKER: Are you asking about the

quality of a co-location relationship?

SENATOR LANZA: Well, in general, because the broader question was: How are the charter school community getting along with the community that's represented to the CECs, and then, ultimately, up to the PEPs?

And you've indicated that it's a case-by-case basis.

So I'm wondering if that case-by-case basis is, more or, less better, based on any geographic realities or any demographic realities?

I'm trying to get my hands around -- because, just to go back to, you know, to one of the early comments was, division and strife.

And I'm trying to get my hands around, you know, what triggers the division and strife beyond, obviously, there's ideological differences?

But, are there other differences, or other things, that make this the way it is?

Because we're talking about the structure of something, and then we're talking about the policy of the people who administer that structure.

And we get to, you know, debate and discuss in our conference, and then, ultimately, as the Senate, with both of those factors in place.

So I'm just trying to understand, is there any geographic or demographic realities to whether there's more or less cooperation when you're dealing with the existing structure of the, you know, non-charter school public community?

IAN ROWE: I mean, the only thing I would say is that, there is a concentration of charter schools, particularly in the South Bronx, Central Brooklyn, and Harlem.

And, so, when you have that level of high concentration, then space becomes more of a, you know, commodity in demand, and that certainly can contribute to tension.

But on each individual building's, you know, particular situation. Geography, I don't think impacts that.

SENATOR LANZA: And is it the need to have sufficient space, and the competition for space, is that really the cutting-edge of the problem when you get down to the grassroots level of this?

I assume the charter schools are in stand-alone buildings, and that they're not part of --

IAN ROWE: No, no, no.

The vast -- no, the vast majority -- or, a

significant majority of public charter schools are co-located space.

SENATOR LANZA: All right. Just one final question.

You know, the phrase that was used earlier on was "Administrative hindering."

Can you give me a couple of examples of that so I can understand what exactly it is you have run into that has been, you know, objectionable?

IAN ROWE: Well, as I mentioned in my testimony, the biggest challenge is, where we weren't even allowed to participate in some of the Mayor's major educational initiatives.

So the ability, for example, to serve 4-year-olds, to start them on the path to college-completion, charters weren't even given the legal right to have that opportunity.

And that was a big battle for us to earn that.

The ability to serve after-school students, beginning in Grade 6, which is a fantastic opportunity to provide a whole host of additional services and additional programming to our kids, charter schools were excluded from that.

We fought, and we earned the right, which is

great, we now have an opportunity, but, we would love to operate in a system where we're all equal from the beginning.

SENATOR LANZA: Mr. Chairman, I'll defer to my more knowledgeable colleague about these things.

But whenever I cross the line from Westchester into The Bronx, I look to increase my education on the topic.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: We'll check your passport.

[Laughter.]

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Senator Krueger.

SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you, Senator Marcellino, and Senator Latimer.

I'll try this one because it works.

Thank you.

One of the three of you said you were motivated to come here to testify today because of your concerns.

But, can I just clarify?

This was a by-invitation-only hearing, so you were actually all invited hear here to testify? Is that correct?

JOE HERRERA: Correct.

IAN ROWE: Yes, that's correct.

DERRELL BRADFORD: Yes.

SENATOR KRUEGER: Okay. Because I actually heard from several other organization who represent parents' groups and public schools, who weren't invited to testify for the record, Senator Marcellino.

So I'm hoping, in the second hearing, we'll have an opportunity for other public school parents and organizations who did want to testify, to be able to.

So I hope that the invitation to this will be opened in some way.

So, I appreciate you all for coming.

I want to thank the CEO of Public Prep for testifying, with actually some experience running a charter school.

For the other two gentlemen:

Mr. Herrera, your title is: Manager of New York Elected Management, at Families for Excellent Schools.

Can you clarify what that means to me?

JOE HERRERA: It's, actually, manager of elected engagement.

I started, I was a volunteer -- parent volunteer, back in 2011, when my child was -- when

I enrolled him into a public charter school.

It was housed in a community center located in a NYCHA housing development. They had no gym. They had no lunch room; kids ate in their classrooms.

It was at that point where I became a really -- really got into education advocacy. Became an organizer in my community. I started working with Families for Excellent Schools later in 2013. And I've just recently took on the position of managing government relations.

SENATOR KRUEGER: And is that Family for Excellent Schools, Inc., or Families for Excellent Schools Advocacy?

JOE HERRERA: That is, Families for Excellent Schools, non-profit (c)3. And we also have a (c)4 sister -- sister (c) -- yeah.

SENATOR KRUEGER: And I notice your budget grew, from about 1 million, to 12 million dollars, over a one-year period.

Can you explain how that happened?

JOE HERRERA: Well, if my budget grew that much, I wouldn't be living in a one-bedroom apartment.

But, the organization that I work for, that

is correct, the organization I work for.

I'm not really -- I don't have specifics on the budget, but, it sounds about right.

SENATOR KRUEGER: So since you're doing government affairs for them, would you ask them to please file their paperwork, because they haven't since 2012?

Because when I attempted to look up the information, there's no information.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: I'll pass on the message.

But, I'm actually here today, to, really, just talk, and now speaking, about, you know, why I got involved in an education-advocacy organization.

And kind of -- this is, really, I represent many families from my community, way before I started working for an organization.

This organization has done a lot to amplify the voices of parents who have normally been silenced.

SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you.

And, Mr. Bradford, your organization is a lobbying organization?

DERRELL BRADFORD: I am a registered

lobbyist, yes.

SENATOR KRUEGER: And the organization itself, specifically, is a lobbying entity and a campaign-distribution system?

Can you explain --

DERRELL BRADFORD: No.

SENATOR KRUEGER: No?

DERRELL BRADFORD: So we are a 501(c)(3).

We do have a PAC, out of which I've given no money.

I registered as a lobbyist only because I thought this might happen.

My role was actually -- my focus, in rebooting the organization, was actually not to come to Albany.

It was to -- because there are plenty of other people who do that here and who do it really well.

It was research and communication.

So, last year we released a report called "Don't Cap Progress," on charter caps in New York.

We did some work on teacher-tenure reform and teacher eval.

I did a lot of community meetings, and engagement, and public speaking, and earned-media

around change in education, because it's very important to me.

SENATOR KRUEGER: So, for you as well, I went to your website and it does say you're a 501(c)(3).

DERRELL BRADFORD: Yes.

SENATOR KRUEGER: But, you don't file paperwork with the Charities Bureau of New York State or the IRS saying you're a 501(c)(3).

So I'm confused about your legal status is, other than you lobby around charter school issues.

DERRELL BRADFORD: Well, allow me to clarify that for you.

SENATOR KRUEGER: Yes.

DERRELL BRADFORD: So all of the CANs, of which I am one, and there are seven others, are under an umbrella 501(c)(3); that is, 50CAN, which is in Washington, D.C.

SENATOR KRUEGER: And, yet, 50CAN has also not registered with the Charities Bureau of New York State to be doing work in New York State.

DERRELL BRADFORD: We have a huge compliance team. I find that highly unlikely. But, I'm happy to look it up for you --

SENATOR KRUEGER: All right, if you could send that up to me --

DERRELL BRADFORD: -- and I'm happy to look it up for you, Senator Krueger.

SENATOR KRUEGER: -- because I did a download, and I couldn't -- thank you.

DERRELL BRADFORD: Indeed.

SENATOR KRUEGER: And your filings under 50CAN talk about over $600,000 being spent in campaign contributions.

But it also --

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Senator --

SENATOR KRUEGER: Yes?

SENATOR MARCELLINO: -- this is on mayoral control.

Where are we going with this?

SENATOR KRUEGER: Well, I -- partly I'm going with --

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Can we just --

SENATOR KRUEGER: -- we're calling this a hearing on mayoral control.

You earlier stated --

DERRELL BRADFORD: Which we support.

SENATOR KRUEGER: -- we can take hearing on --

Oh, good. Thank you.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Which they said,

clearly, all three groups; and it's in their written statements, have all said that they support mayoral control. We're talking about the differentiation in time.

If you want to go after each individual group yourself, if you feel they've done something illegal --

SENATOR KRUEGER: No, I want to highlight --

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Excuse me.

If you think they've done something illegal or improper, there are ways to deal with that, and perhaps you should do that.

But, this isn't the forum.

SENATOR KRUEGER: Well, actually, I think what's improper is this was an invitation-only hearing, where specific lobbying organizations were invited to be representatives; organizations who actually --

SENATOR MARCELLINO: This is not a typical.

There have been many other hearings held by the Democrats when they were in charge, and the Republicans when we're in charge --

SENATOR KRUEGER: I just wanted to clarify who was invited to testify.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: We invited --

SENATOR KRUEGER: And the fact is that --

SENATOR MARCELLINO: -- a whole range of individuals.

And to the end of what you said before, we received no complaints.

Anyone who said they wanted to testify as an individual will send us something in writing.

We haven't received that.

If they wanted to put it, we can put it as part of the record.

There is a downstate hearing on the 19th where other groups will be invited, and have been invited, and will be speaking.

We've invited the Mayor to come back. We're waiting for his accommodations.

And Chancellor Fariña said she would attend.

Can we just get on to the mayoral-control aspect of it?

And if you want to go after these individual groups, that's your prerogative.

SENATOR KRUEGER: No, I just wanted to highlight --

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Can we just get back on to --

SENATOR KRUEGER: -- who was invited to

testify to this hearing.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Can we get back on to mayoral control?

SENATOR KRUEGER: Yes.

All three of you, please answer the question: Do you support continuation of mayoral control for New York City?

SENATOR MARCELLINO: They've all said that. It was asked and answered.

SENATOR KRUEGER: I'm asking them, I'm just double-checking.

DERRELL BRADFORD: With caveats, as I've stated; but, yes.

IAN ROWE: Yeah, as I've said, I think mayoral control, with an oversight process, that has explicit performance metrics that are agreed upon at the outset, probably with increments of one, three, and five years, which demonstrate that the person who has control has earned the right to preserve the opportunity to be in control.

JOE HERRERA: I vote for the -- Mayor de Blasio.

I voted for mayoral control.

And I also chose to put my children in the schools that best suit them.

So, I am in favor of all three.

SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

Gentlemen, thank you for your time.

[Applause.]

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Mr. Joe Luft.

Go ahead.

Again, your written statement, if you have one, we can submit that up here.

We'll pick it up. Don't worry about that.

Just, I'd appreciate if you would just summarize and not read the whole thing.

JOSEPH LUFT: Good afternoon.

My name is Joseph Luft. I'm the executive director of Internationals Network For Public Schools. We're a non-profit based in New York City.

I would like to thank you all for holding this hearing today on the extension of mayoral control.

I am here to speak in support of a multiyear extension on mayoral control.

Having served as a New York City teacher and principal for 15 years, in addition to working with non-profit organizations, I can personally attest to

the benefits of the increased accountability and coordination that come with mayoral control.

Internationals Network, my organization, is the sole school- and professional-development organization devoted exclusively to working with adolescent immigrant English-language learners who are new arrivals to the country.

The 15 international high schools in New York City have demonstrated outstanding levels of success in graduating immigrant youth prepared for college and careers.

Internationals Network works to open and support small high schools that serve recently-arrived immigrants, and this work was made possible through successful partnerships with New York City Department of Ed, with strong support from the mayor.

Our organization is now one of several non-profits that have a track record of partnership with the Department of Education, to provide support to schools through a structure which is now called the "affinity-group structure."

These support organizations have successfully developed a wide variety of school models that serve students who have, historically, had limited access

to higher-quality, rigorous, and supportive educational options in New York City.

These groups have benefited the system more broadly by bringing innovations into the system that they've created.

As a result, thousands of students and families across the city have realized their dreams and gone on to success in college and in the workforce.

Our organization, and others, have had a significant and lasting impact on the school system, as a whole, by injecting these new ideas and models for underserved students.

Under mayoral control, schools in New York City have increased graduation and attendance rates, students are safer at school.

The 15 schools in Internationals Network in New York City serve over 5,000 English-language learners, and provide a highly successful model with proven effectiveness. Evidence backs this up.

The average graduation rate for our New York City schools in 2014-15 was 71 percent, compared to a graduation rate of 34 percent for ELA statewide.

Average attendance rate across our schools during the same period was 89 percent.

96 percent of the students in our schools have reported feeling safe in their classrooms.

I urge the Senate to consider the positive effects of a multiyear extension of mayoral control.

In the end, mayoral control ensures there is direct accountability for the success of New York City's public schools.

The support from the highest levels of City leadership is essential to supporting ambitious and sustainable change over time.

As a representative of Internationals Network, and as a parent of two New York City public school children, I hope you will extend mayoral control to make sure that our organization and other non-profit partners can continue to play an essential role in supporting schools that serve so many of the underserved youth in New York City.

I thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and for holding this hearing.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you for being here. We appreciate your testimony.

One of the staff will take the forms from you.

Senator Latimer?

SENATOR LANZA: No questions. Thank you.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Liz?

SENATOR KRUEGER: Can you just repeat for me, you have how many schools in New York City?

JOSEPH LUFT: 15.

SENATOR KRUEGER: 15.

JOSEPH LUFT: Yes.

SENATOR KRUEGER: Much larger than I thought.

I know of the school in my district off Union Square, on Irving Place.

JOSEPH LUFT: Yes.

SENATOR KRUEGER: Do you have others in Manhattan?

JOSEPH LUFT: Manhattan International High School in the Julia Richmond Complex.

It's one of our oldest schools, yes.

SENATOR KRUEGER: And being -- being defined -- that is also in my district, yes. It's a very good school.

They're defined as members of your consortium, but they're also defined as just public high schools?

JOSEPH LUFT: They're all --

SENATOR KRUEGER: What's the relationship?

JOSEPH LUFT: -- so they're all traditional public schools, or, district schools.

Our role is as a -- we're a non-profit organization.

We provide support to those schools through some leadership-development training, coaching for principals, professional development, and instructional coaching, and some curricula resources for those schools as well.

I was also the founding -- full disclosure, I was the founding principal of one of the schools out in Flushing, in Queens.

SENATOR KRUEGER: So you have been expanding the model?

JOSEPH LUFT: Yes.

We're also -- we have schools outside of New York City as well, but most of our schools are here.

SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you very much.

JOSEPH LUFT: You're welcome.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

I'm going to probably butcher this last name, but, Georgia M. Asciutto.

Correct me if I'm wrong, please.

GEORGIA M. ASCIUTTO: Hello, Mr. Chairman, and Senators.

I'm joined by my colleague Jennifer Pyle,

Deputy Director of the Big 5.

My testimony is brief, and I will get started.

The Conference of Big 5 school districts, on behalf of New York City public schools, strongly supports a multiyear extension of New York City's current school-governance structure as requested by Mayor de Blasio.

This model was established pursuant to Chapter 91 of the laws of 2002, and has garnered widespread local support throughout the city's education community, including parent organizations, and among the business sector and public-interest advocates.

Let me begin by stating that there is precedent for policy decisions pertaining to the governance of urban school districts in New York State to be developed in a manner that is reflective of individual community interests.

This is most striking in the Big 5 school districts.

These districts are differentiated from all other school districts in New York State with regard to their fiscal dependency, yet they also have varied local government structures.

Outside of the Big 5, school-board members in New York State are elected on a uniform school-board election and budget vote day on the third Tuesday in May, and this is not the case in our districts.

New York City has mayoral-control-governance structure, with the citywide Panel for Education Policy and 32 community district educational councils.

The other Big 5 have distinctly different models.

In Yonkers, the school board is appointed by the mayor, and the mayor exercises financial and operational management of the school districts.

In Rochester and Syracuse, school-board members are elected at large in November during the general election, and run on political party lines, with school-board members taking office on January 1st, in the middle of the school year.

In Buffalo, 6 of the 9 school-board seats are district-specific seats with 3-year terms, and 3 seats are at large for 5-year terms, making all 9 school-board member terms expire every 15 years.

And as also noteworthy, that Buffalo's school-board election, which was held yesterday, is unlike all other elected school boards in the state.

These different statutes are important because they confirm that education-policy decisions regarding school governance are made based on local factors.

New York City's current governance structure has served parents and students well.

Student achievement in New York City has shown consistent improvement since mayoral control was established.

As you've already heard, graduation rates and test scores have risen steadily.

Furthermore, the dropout rate is at an all-time low and more students are enrolling in college.

Much of this positive news can be attributed to Mayor de Blasio's Equity in Excellence plan for New York City schools.

The Mayor and Chancellor Fariña are committed to goals, including 80 percent of students graduating from high school on time, and all students reading by second grade.

Mayor de Blasio's focus on early literacy has been unwaivering, as has been his pledge to provide pre-kindergarten for all children.

The City remains committed to rigor at all

levels, including an expansion of AP courses and ensuring all children graduate career- and college-ready.

Under the leadership of Chancellor Fariña, the New York City school system has expanded opportunities and programs for all students, and increased instructional support and initiatives under the renewal schools' program, as you heard about.

The district has also invested significantly in the provision of critical professional-development opportunities for teachers and principals, and placed a great emphasis on efforts to recruit and retain teachers and administrators, particularly in shortage areas such as bilingual education.

The Chancellor's hands-on approach and responsiveness to students, parents, teachers, and administrators has proven to be very successful in the over 50 town hall meetings; or as she said earlier, closer to 100, has certainly bolstered community engagement in unprecedented ways.

In our view, this all speaks to a continuation of the current school-governance structure, and the Conference of Big 5 school

districts urges you to provide a multiyear extension for mayoral control.

Thank you.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Go ahead.

SENATOR LANZA: Just one question.

Georgia, since you've looked at other models, and every model is different, we're dealing with the issue of how long an extension should be for. And there's been three different examples of how we've done it: when we originally established it and the two times we've renewed it.

Do you have any metric or any indicator as to what the number of years make particular sense?

As an example, when we renew sales-tax bills, we do them, routinely, for two years. Hotel-tax bills, routinely, for three years.

I'm wondering if you advise that there's any sort of any routine amount of time that should be in the extension of mayoral control?

GEORGIA M. ASCIUTTO: We would support Mayor de Blasio's request for seven years.

We don't have an expiration in our other models in our other school districts.

So I don't know if that's helpful, or not.

I mean, certainly, a short term just raises

to the concerns of inconsistency, and is not good for the system; for teachers and parents and students.

So I think, certainly, a longer term than one year or two years or three years would be helpful.

SENATOR LANZA: Thank you.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: The problem with that is, the Mayor's term is four years.

So if we give him seven years, it goes beyond this individual, and you don't know what the policies of the incoming mayor will be.

So, I don't know if it should be restricted to the term of a mayor and not to go beyond that, to be renewed after that, or something to effect.

I think it has to be taken into consideration.

But if you're looking for something that goes beyond the term of a person, then you're running the risk of that next person coming in may not like some of the policies that the prior administration set up, and you'll have fight and a warfare.

So that's something to be into consideration when making the decision.

Liz.

SENATOR KRUEGER: No, I don't.

Thank you very much for your testimony.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you, ladies.

Appreciate it.

Is Robert Lowry here?

Go right ahead, please.

ROBERT LOWRY: Yes, Chairman Marcellino, Senator Latimer, Senator Krueger, I'm Robert Lowry, deputy director of the New York State Council of School Superintendents.

Our membership includes community superintendents within New York City and some other superintendent-level officials.

We also provide professional-development opportunities for other administrators within the New York City public schools.

Thank you for the invitation to provide testimony today.

And thank you, also, for all your support in the new state budget.

No one should desire a system -- or, a return to the school-governance structure that preceded mayoral control in New York City, and I say that despite the fact that our organization lost all its New York City members for a time when mayoral

control was first implemented.

Under the prior law, the city schools were overseen by a central board of education comprised of seven members appointed by six different authorities: two by the mayor, five by each of the borough presidents.

It was accountable to no one; not to the mayor, nor to the voters.

There were also community school districts, each elected by voters and their communities.

And this made it impossible to provide consistent guidance to schools, and to contribute equitable funding for all the children across the city.

In the 20 years preceding mayoral control, 10 different men served as chancellor, an average of one every other year.

The system was denied stability and top leadership essential for a sustained, effective implementation of school improvements and strategies.

Under the prior system, the central board members received compensation, employed staff, and sought to indulge in day-to-day supervision of school operations, and this also impeded effective

administration of leadership.

Under the old structure with the community school boards, superintendents answered to those elected boards, and reports of corruption and mismanagement due to community board influence were common.

Less dramatically, but just as harmful, is the sense that the dispersion of authority made it impossible to establish or advance citywide priorities, nor was the system able to address concerns about equitable distribution of resources.

The mayoral-control legislation replaced that, making the -- giving the mayor the authority to appoint a chancellor, and the chancellor to appoint the community district superintendents.

In the years since mayoral control was first enacted, there have been ongoing adjustments in the responsibility given to intermediate-level district administration.

Initially, the community schools -- community superintendents were replaced by 10 regional superintendents and 110 local instructional supervisors. These officials were focused on instruction and they lacked broad authority over schools.

And, later, these offices were abolished and replaced with a system which required principals to select a school-support organization among a dozen or so options, and this structure also emitted a strong intermediate-level administration.

The latest iteration strikes a good balance. It restores the position of the community superintendent, with clear responsibilities over the selection of principals and all school operations, including accountability for student achievement, and parent and community engagement, while retaining capacity for appropriate central direction.

Since the enactment of mayoral control, there have been various systemic improvements.

And you've heard about the expansion of pre-K, from 19,000 students, I think three years ago, to over 65,000 this year.

Also, the effort to expand community schools.

And next fall, an effort to try and ensure that every high school student has access to AP classes.

Most importantly, under mayoral control, we've seen dramatic improvements in outcomes.

This year, over 70 percent of high school students graduated, up from under 50 percent prior

to mayoral control.

And, notably, this includes gains across all ethnic groups, with those for Black and Hispanic students more than twice as great as those for White students.

And also under mayoral control, the performance of New York City students on state assessments is, essentially, the same as for students in the remainder of the state as a whole.

Of course, many factors contributed to this, including the various initiatives, and it's difficult to implement those kinds of strategic priorities without strong central authority.

We've also seen improvements in funding for New York City schools coming from the City itself.

And I attribute that to the fact that the Mayor is now accountable for results.

Since the adoption of mayoral control, the City's increased its local support for its schools at, roughly, twice the rate for the remainder of the state.

Prior to mayoral control, the City often lagged behind the rest of the state in its local support for its schools.

Citing the virtues of mayoral control for one

city might be seized on as indicating support for that proposition for all cities; but, New York City is utterly unique.

It's nearly twice the size of Chicago, and enrolls more than 20 times as many students as Buffalo, the next largest district in our state.

Even Staten Island, the smallest of the five boroughs, enrolls more than 50 percent more students than Buffalo.

Our members are employees of the communities they serve; and, accordingly, our basic position is that changes in the design of school governance for our large urban district, including mayoral control, should reflect the consensus sentiments of the communities the school systems serve.

When the New York City Mayoral Control Law was enacted, there was a strong and widespread sense that the governance model in place at that time was not working.

Today, in contrast, public sentiment towards the state of the city schools is impressively strong.

Every year, the City has been doing surveys of parents and teachers of their satisfaction with the schools, and those results are impressively

high, in the vicinity of 95 percent of parents saying that they are satisfied with the education their children are receiving.

Accordingly, for all these foregoing reasons, we strongly urge extension of mayoral control for the New York City schools.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Would that include the -- a term that would exceed the term of the elected mayor?

ROBERT LOWRY: We would support the mayor's request for a seven-year extension.

In addition, I make the general statement that, you know, just as it was unhealthy for the city to have this constant churning of chancellors, the uncertainty of continuing short-term extensions in the basic governance structure is problematic, creating the uncertainty, and perhaps making it difficult to attract someone like a Carmen Fariña to serve as chancellor.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

SENATOR LANZA: Answered the one question I had, Rob.

Thank you.

SENATOR KRUEGER: If I may, sir?

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Go ahead.

SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you.

This is an addendum to Senator Marcellino's question.

So, given your experience overseeing school districts all over the state, if we made the timeline for mayoral-control decisions parallel to mayoral terms, couldn't you walk yourself into a brand new mayor coming in, suddenly having to confront a radical change in the statutes for the school system in New York?

And don't you think that would be sort of an overwhelming new problem for any new administration coming in?

JOSEPH LUFT: I would anticipate that.

And I would also just say, you know, I'm not -- I never lived in New York City.

But, observing from a distance, back in the 1990s, working in this building, and the Capitol, that system was horrid, and that is the default option if mayoral control expires: going back to that system.

And I don't think anyone should want that.

SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

Julie Marlette.

Miss Marlette is the director of government relations -- governmental relations, New York State School Boards Association.

JULIE MARLETTE: Good afternoon, Chairman Marcellino.

Thank you so much for inviting me.

And Senators Krueger and Latimer, thanks so much for staying here for me.

However, in the interest of time, and knowing that you all want to get off to session, I believe you said it started at 3:00, I want to just honor your request, and I'm not going to read my statement, which I believe you have in front of you.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Bless you.

JULIE MARLETTE: But, instead, just make a few brief points and try to preemptively answer the questions that I think we've heard most commonly today, which is to say:

First and foremost, that the New York State School Boards Association does, in fact, represent, as well as over 600 other districts, the city school district of the city of New York.

And on behalf of our membership, we are supporting the Mayor's request for a seven-year extension to mayoral control.

I know that the question has come up repeatedly today, whether such an extended extension makes sense, as it may exceed the term of the sitting mayor.

And I would say that, while that's certainly an interesting conversation point, and I think it's one worthy of the discussion that's been had today, the reasons that we would support that, are that seven years is long enough that it provides a real sense of stability.

And though I know I'm echoing some of the preceding testifiers by saying that, I think that stability and that ability for long-term planning is incredibly important for the school district, right from the top to the bottom, to the youngest student entering to the person making the largest decisions in the Mayor's Office and in the DOE.

Second, I think that, you know, if there's any comfort to be brought by looking at history, there's a precedent for that kind of change, because I believe if we looked back to the 2009 reauthorization, I believe we found ourselves in an election year where we didn't know who would be leading the city in the next year; but at the same time, we're faced with having to make a decision

about whether or not to reauthorize mayoral control.

And we did so, and I believe we did so for a number of years. Five, if my memory serves.

Those are the two overarching points I wanted to just address preemptively, without waiting for your questions.

And I am certainly happy to stay and answer questions for as long as you'd like.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

SENATOR KRUEGER: You answered my question.

Thank you.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: My only question would be: If you go seven years, for example, you've got one full term, and three years into the second -- if the person is reelected, three years into the second term. And then you're going to have a new mayor after a year.

So, eventually, you're going to run into that problem of the overlapping, or the inconsistency, where there's going to be a change.

So, the new mayor is going to come in and still going to be -- have to deal with that problem.

JULIE MARLETTE: And I certainly don't think I would advocate to deliberately link up those terms starting and ending as sort of a condition of

renewal.

I think that seven years, though, is a time frame that we certainly know is long enough to provide against stability and consistency in long-term planning.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Why not eight?

JULIE MARLETTE: I certainly think the Mayor would support eight, as would I.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Why question is, it seems to be an arbitrary number.

I don't know the origin of that "seven years."

We're going to find that out.

But the question in my mind is just the terminology, and seeking the term.

And, one year, two years, three years, four years, these are numbers that are picked out there.

There's got to be good, logical reason for it, and we're going to get more testimony from the City, and we'll see what comes from that.

But, thank you for your testimony.

JULIE MARLETTE: No problem.

SENATOR LANZA: I'd like to make one point, just before Julie goes, only because you're here and this is the end of the hearing.

I've avoided making statements, and more questions.

But, what I'm looking for out of this process is a standard number of years, and I want to see that replicated in the future.

I want us to have stability.

If we're going to have five, seven, whatever that number is, that ought to be what we do from here on.

So it's not a question of what any one mayor requests, or, we're happy with this mayor, we're unhappy with this mayor, then we start playing with the numbers on the basis of that.

A standard number would make sense to me.

The second thing is, whatever number we have, we still have the right to revisit any legislation anytime we want.

We talk about things in perpetuity, but in the next session, we could reopen any issue that we have said has been closed, if that's the choice of the legislators.

So I think we have the option if certain circumstances warrant it.

So, in my interest, and your comment, and Bob Lowry's comment, and Georgia Asciutto's comment,

it's just to see what thinking that you've had.

Not only what the Mayor's requested, but what thinking you've head, because you've had experience in dealing with many other districts that have things that -- not just control issues, but things that are on some kind of a cycle; and, what's a logical amount of cycle?

So, with that, thank you, Mr. Chairman, for letting me share those things.

SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you very much for your testimony.

The meeting is adjourned.

JULIE MARLETTE: Thank you, Chairman.

(Whereupon, at approximately 2:37 p.m., the public hearing held before the New York State Senate Standing Committee on Education concluded, and adjourned.)

---oOo---