

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

3 PUBLIC HEARING:

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

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

10 May 4, 2016
11 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

12 PRESIDING:

13 Senator Carl L. Marcellino
14 Chair

15 PRESENT:

16 Senator George S. Latimer (RM)

17 Senator Neil D. Breslin

18 Senator Leroy Comrie

19 Senator John A. DeFrancisco

20 Senator Simcha Felder

21 Senator Martin J. Golden

22 Senator Jesse E. Hamilton

23 Senator Brad M. Hoylman

24 Senator Liz Krueger

25 Senator Andrew J. Lanza

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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

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

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: She's in the building.

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

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Reverse of Elvis has
7 left the building.

8 Chancellor is in the building.

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

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

13 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Be my guest.

14 We're calling the hearing to order.

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

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

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

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

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

3 That would be appreciated.

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

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

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

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

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

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

17 SENATOR MARCELLINO: I'd appreciate it.

18 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: All right. Fair
19 enough.

20 SENATOR MARCELLINO: To introduce my
21 colleagues:

22 We have Senator Golden to my right,
23 Marty Golden.

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

1 Senator Felder, who are seated to my right.

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

5 SENATOR LANZA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

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

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

20 So, we appreciate your time, Mayor.

21 We appreciate your attention.

22 This is a very important topic, clearly.

23 I had a very enjoyable visit to my old high
24 school, with Chancellor Fariña, where I taught for
25 20 years in the city of New York. So, I was an

1 employee of the city education system.

2 I have fond memories, going back.

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

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

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

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

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

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

22 Let me just start off with a question.

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

1 Why'd you change your mind?

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

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

9 Thank you for having me.

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

14 I appreciate that deeply.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

8 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Thank you.

9 Thank you, I look forward.

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

13 Chancellor Fariña and I go back almost
14 15 years, to when we were serving District 15,
15 Brooklyn. I was a school-board member. She was our
16 district superintendent.

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

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

23 I think there's congratulations for that.

24 [Applause.]

25 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: It's a survival.

1 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: That's right.

2 SENATOR MARCELLINO: For that, she needs a
3 medal.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

24 It allows us to get things done.

25 It allows us to have real accountability.

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

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

6 Education determines economic destiny.

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

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

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

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

25 Mayoral control, in stark contrast,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

18 They say, quote:

19 The system has not worked well.

20 Lines of authority are confused and sometimes
21 illogical.

22 Bureaucratic layers have multiplied rather
23 than decreased.

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

1 Shunned school-board elections.

2 That's what was.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

9 And, thank God, Mayor Bloomberg achieved it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

14 50.8.

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

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

20 Since we have come into office, we have added
21 to that increase in the graduation rate, another
22 4.5 percent gain over two years.

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

1 All combined, in the mayoral-control era, a
2 20 percent increase, from 50 percent, to over
3 70 percent, in our graduation rate.

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

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

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

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

15 11 years ago, 22 percent of kids dropped out
16 of school; never came back, never reengaged.

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

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

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

24 Also, key indicators under mayoral control:

25 Attendance is improving. We're now at

1 92.2 percent citywide attendance, highest level in
2 the last decade.

3 Academic performance is improving.

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

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

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

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

18 The support of the Legislature made that
19 possible.

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

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

25 Only five months to do it.

1 Under mayoral control that was possible.

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

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

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

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

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

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

19 130 community schools in New York City now,
20 where young people are getting a lot more support:
21 mental-health support, physical health, more
22 engagement of their parents and the larger community
23 into the school.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

16 Let me use a great example.

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

20 I had the pleasure of being out there last
21 May.

22 What's happening there?

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

1 are modeled on college courses in every way.

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

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

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

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

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

16 I mentioned your support for after-school.

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

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

22 110,000 middle school kids in New York City
23 now getting free after-school, three hours a day,
24 with tutoring and enrichment. They're safe after
25 school. Their parents know where they are. They're

1 getting the support they need.

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

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

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

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

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

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

20 The Chancellor constantly meets with
21 representatives of parents.

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

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

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

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

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

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

14 Can we close the phones?

15 Just turn the cell phones off, please.

16 That includes the audience too.

17 We don't want them to interfere.

18 Please continue.

19 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Thank you.

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

23 This is really striking.

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

1 38 percent increase in parent involvement in the
2 parent-teacher conferences.

3 We have, literally, had some schools where
4 100 percent of parents attended.

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

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

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

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

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

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

7 So I brought a different kind of perspective
8 and experience.

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

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

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

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

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

21 That's why the huge investment in
22 professional development.

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

1 And I wanted to give you an updated number,
2 that, from January 1, 2014, when I became mayor,
3 until the end of this last March, we helped guide
4 1,361 teachers out of the New York City public
5 schools; people who were not suited to the
6 profession, and we helped find the right pathway
7 out.

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

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

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

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

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

24 We have pledged to take that to over
25 80 percent in the next 10 years, and we're making

1 major investments and policy changes to achieve
2 that.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 In the next five years, every high school

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 great outcome after high school.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

14 Next year, if you continue on a similar path
15 of aid again, which we appreciate, we will raise
16 that commitment. We will get to an average of
17 92.5 percent for all schools across the system. A
18 base of 90 percent. No school below 90 percent.

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

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

1 I conclude by saying:

2 I ask your consideration for an extension of
3 mayoral control.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 It's as simple as that.

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

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

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

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

11 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

12 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

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

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

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

25 But it's good to have high expectations and

1 high aspirations.

2 Quinnipiac recently did a poll that said
3 46 percent of the voters in the city of New York
4 favored an extension of mayoral control, while
5 43 percent of the voters in New York City opposed
6 it.

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

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

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

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

18 What do you say to them?

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

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

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

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

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

11 But I would say we have a powerful proof
12 point.

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

16 I ran, supporting mayoral control.

17 Polls are polls.

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

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

22 Elections are a formal decision by the
23 people.

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

1 mayoral control because the candidates running
2 believed in mayoral control.

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

6 That's happened under mayoral control.

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

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

14 What's the City's contribution?

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

18 Hold on one second, Senator.

19 My apology.

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

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

1 SENATOR MARCELLINO: That's all right.

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

4 That's the overall.

5 Thank you.

6 From able Sherif Soliman, it's come to
7 16.8 billion, Senator.

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

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

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

14 Thank you, Senator, for tolerating.

15 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Not a problem.

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

19 If I've missed anybody, please.

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

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

1 criteria.

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

6 How do you deal with that?

7 How are you dealing with that?

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

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

12 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Sure.

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

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

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

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

1 So no school can change their admissions
2 procedures.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Sure.

1 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: So to put in context:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

24 Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

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

1 to see you again.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 We've made them a focal point of school

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 And the major difference is, when I go to

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

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

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

8 And I think that's really important.

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

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

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

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

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

25 But in terms of a change for that

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

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

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

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

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

19 They just did it this week for Fort Richmond.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

17 But, also, what are the latest books?

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

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

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

25 SENATOR LANZA: I have just one final

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 That was not always the case.

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

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

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

10 The answer is, yes, we are.

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

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

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

25 SENATOR LANZA: Thank you both very much.

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

3 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

4 Senator Golden.

5 SENATOR GOLDEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

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

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

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

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

22 How is that better today, or worse?

23 And how do you track that?

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

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

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

8 But the proof is in the pudding.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6 District 20, obviously, is severely
7 overcrowded.

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

12 What is the plan over the next ten years?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

10 SENATOR GOLDEN: Sure.

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

13 And, now, the current capital plan for the
14 SCA is at 14.9 billion. That runs through fiscal
15 2019.

16 It is now pegged at 44,000 new seats.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

9 We're going to keep doing that.

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

14 We have to constantly make adjustments.

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

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

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

25 SENATOR GOLDEN: The areas -- thank you very

1 much.

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

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

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

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

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

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

21 We have put out training programs.

22 The week that teachers were off, we had
23 400 teachers who came to STEM training at the
24 Stiverson High School. Many of them elementary
25 schoolteachers.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 Last year we had a one-day training session

1 on STEM. 1,000 teachers of showed up.

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

5 So, it's a big emphasis.

6 It's not a room in a school.

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 So I would hope that we would do that.

2 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Can I just add --

3 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Absolutely.

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

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

11 But go ahead, sir.

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

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

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

1 career.

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

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

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

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

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

25 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: And I will also

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

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

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

12 We're trying to bring more programs to them.

13 They are seeing a real increase in their
14 enrollment.

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

17 People -- and, also, gives students options.

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

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

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

25 But, students should have options.

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

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

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

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

15 So I want to thank you for doing that.

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

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

21 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Yes.

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

1 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Exactly right.

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

4 The biggest element of the plan is to reduce
5 homelessness.

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 transportation.

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

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

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

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

17 But one last thing, Senator:

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

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

25 So as the shelter reality has changed, we

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

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

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

13 How does that play into this as well?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

13 So, you know, people voted with their feet.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3 Let me be very clear:

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

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

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

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

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

25 So, for example:

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

4 We had grants to run after-school programs.

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

7 We have high schools with six high schools in
8 them.

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

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

14 But it's takes a lot of work.

15 Some work better than others.

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

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

24 We certainly did that in --

25 SENATOR GOLDEN: What we're hearing is,

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

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

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

8 But I want to thank you for your testimony.

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

11 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Absolutely.

12 Thank you, Senator.

13 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you, Senator.

14 Senator Hamilton.

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

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

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

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

25 As time moves on, I'm the Senator from

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

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

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

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

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

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

22 So, I just wanted to put that out there.

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

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

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

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

15 I think we need more of that holistic
16 approach.

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

20 PS 284, from 22 percent, under 6 percent.

21 PS 218, from 18.9 percent, to under
22 6 percent.

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

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

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

3 But seeing those scores, we start at the
4 campus in Brownsville, and the campus is
5 42 community-based organizations, working with
6 3 schools, to have technology and wellness centers,
7 with the Brooklyn public libraries.

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

13 On the point about -- the last point --

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

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

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

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

25 That is putting a stress on particular

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 their path forward.

2 So we're making a number of investments.

3 As I mentioned, the investments in the
4 shelters.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

23 SENATOR HAMILTON: I want to thank your wife
24 also.

25 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Well, that's where

1 I was going to go.

2 I thank my wife every day.

3 SENATOR MARCELLINO: That's a very wise
4 position.

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

7 I came to that realization early in marriage,
8 sir.

9 SENATOR MARCELLINO: So did I.

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

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

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

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

19 We do not have a mental-health system.

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

1 But the schools are a crucial piece of this.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

21 She actually came to our district last week.

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

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

1 initiative and bringing to it forefront.

2 So I want to thank her for that.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

18 So there needs to be a lot of training.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 knows about.

2 SENATOR HAMILTON: Yes, Chancellor.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 That's number one.

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

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

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

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

12 We created a professional development plan
13 for all the teachers.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

14 But, once again, I do think that, in terms of
15 how we encourage parents, we're encouraging
16 "Mommy and Me" classes in some of the schools, in
17 some of the neighborhoods where there's space.
18 3-year-olds, come with your child; learn how to read
19 to your child.

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

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

1 about.

2 They had all kinds of euphemisms.

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

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

9 We're working with a lot of hospitals.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3 I look forward to working with you.

4 You're doing a great job.

5 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

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

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

12 And, to that end, Senator LaValle.

13 SENATOR LaVALLE: Nice to meet you.

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

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

18 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: In Brooklyn.

19 SENATOR LaVALLE: In Brooklyn.

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

22 You turned out good.

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

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

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

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

7 SENATOR LaVALLE: I lived on Henry Street.

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

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

12 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Absolutely.

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

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

17 And, how often do you meet with the
18 Chancellor?

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

22 Typically, once a week.

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

25 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Multi-faceted agenda.

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

3 We constantly are talking about special
4 education.

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

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

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

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

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

19 The regular meetings with the Chancellor.

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

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

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

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

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

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

11 And I see you have a smile on your face.

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

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

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

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

25 But, you know, having been a public school

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

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

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

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

17 Lunch; making sure that children have lunch.

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

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

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

1 hitting the right mark here.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 We did that with the after-school initiative,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

20 So we take visits.

21 We just had visitors from Yonkers, from
22 Rochester.

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

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

3 SENATOR LaVALLE: Right.

4 A lot of good stuff goes on in the city.

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

8 So, this goes to mayoral control:

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

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

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

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

20 In many cases, new leadership. I think
21 33 new principals.

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

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

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

3 More professional development.

4 We've seen an improvement in attendance.

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

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

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

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

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

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

20 Many of them had become very small over time.

21 A little bit of a chicken-egg dynamic.

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

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

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

7 So we've started aggressively on that route.

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

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

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

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

19 SENATOR LaVALLE: Well, are these in poor
20 areas?

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

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

25 SENATOR LaVALLE: Could you give me a number

1 out of the 94?

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

4 SENATOR LaVALLE: Yes.

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

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

11 So we'll get you the exact number.

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

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

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

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

25 So we're not just changing what we do in

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

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

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

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

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

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

19 I do school visits all the time.

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

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

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

1 It went to eighth grade.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

13 And thank you for your help.

14 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

15 Senator Felder.

16 SENATOR FELDER: Good morning.

17 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Good morning.

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

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

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

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

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

3 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Yes,
4 Single Shepherd.

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

9 I think I mentioned this last time.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

23 And these parents are paying year after year
24 after year.

25 So this -- these -- this -- these

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

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

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

11 (Pause in the proceeding.)

12 (The proceeding resumes.)

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

14 SENATOR FELDER: It's not a problem.

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

17 Senator Perkins intervened.

18 Thank you.

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

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

25 If there's a situation where a student has a

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

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

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

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

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

16 I then wrote another letter in December.

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

20 And, by the way, I like them all.

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

25 But, irrespective of that, one time, I would

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

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

6 I know that, and I want to believe that.

7 So, it's not about Felder.

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

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

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

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

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

1 about this a number of times.

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

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

8 A parent who is dealing with a profound
9 challenge --

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

10 We said we were going to change that.

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

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

17 It was a beginning.

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

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

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

25 No one is pretending it is.

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

7 We have a lot more to do.

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

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

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

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

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

19 I apologize for that.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 timelines to how we will implement that.

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

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

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

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

14 It's not something new.

15 One.

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

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

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

1 discussion two years ago.

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

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

8 I apologize myself.

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

11 But -- but, I'm your constituent.

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

14 So I admit --

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

17 SENATOR FELDER: Yes.

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

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

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

1 day.

2 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I will deny she is an
3 alien.

4 SENATOR FELDER: Okay. Wonderful person.

5 But getting back to the commitment --

6 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

7 SENATOR FELDER: I'm not done.

8 SENATOR MARCELLINO: I know.

9 SENATOR FELDER: And I don't have my notes,
10 by the way.

11 -- I need a commitment, because it's not me.

12 And the apology I accept for the thousands of
13 families. It's not for me.

14 I need to walk out here today and hear from
15 you -- because I know you can do it -- that you are
16 going to have this implemented for next year.

17 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Okay. Senator, again,
18 I'm going to be straightforward.

19 One, I think we have some differences on what
20 was the original vision, but I think the underlying
21 impulse was exactly the same.

22 I think you and I have felt a lot of the same
23 things from day one.

24 I am happy to review all the videotapes in
25 the world, because we have comported ourselves with

1 consistency.

2 And, again, for years and years, this was not
3 acted on.

4 We have acted on it, which proves --
5 I believe in a thing called (indiscernible), and
6 this proves, because we did something, that we
7 intend to do more.

8 We didn't do this for superficiality.

9 We did this for a reason: That we want to
10 lighten the burden on parents, and we want to get
11 something done for kids.

12 So the reason I want to do this properly and
13 carefully is, I'm not gonna ever say to you
14 something very specific, and then not keep to it.

15 Do I want to get as much done for September,
16 opening day of school, as humanly possible? Yes.

17 We will delineate exactly what that means.

18 I'll do you one better: We will delineate
19 exactly what that means.

20 But to your core point, that no one should
21 have to go to a lawyer and pay money and struggle
22 for something that we all agree isn't necessary,
23 I want to end that practice; there's no two ways
24 about it.

25 And the reason we sent the letter, and

1 I again apologize for the delay -- is this is -- we
2 actually are united in wanting to get to this place.

3 Do you have my commitment we want to get to
4 this place? Yes.

5 As quickly as humanly possible? Yes.

6 What does that mean?

7 The ultimate concept, it does mean we will
8 put it in writing and distribute it to the world.

9 SENATOR FELDER: And when will that be?

10 SENATOR MARCELLINO: I believe we can give
11 you an answer by next week.

12 SENATOR FELDER: You mean the written --

13 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: A written answer.

14 SENATOR FELDER: I appreciate that.

15 Thank you very much.

16 And, again, thank you very much for the work
17 you've done so far.

18 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Thank you.

19 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Senator Stavisky.

20 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

21 Can I borrow?

22 (No working microphone.)

23 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you both for coming.

24 Very, very quickly I read your testimony, and
25 you have four points --

1 I'll use my classroom voice.

2 -- you have four points of accomplishments of
3 mayoral control.

4 There was one area that you did not discuss,
5 and that is the question of discipline in the
6 schools.

7 And I know you're proud of the fact that
8 suspensions are down by approximately a third; and,
9 yet, there was a story and an editorial in
10 "The Daily News" in April, April 30th, that talked
11 about the suspensions.

12 And one of the things, that when I visit --

13 (Microphone turned on.)

14 SENATOR STAVISKY: Now it's on.

15 One of the things that I -- that when I visit
16 schools, supervisors often complain to me about how
17 they're forced to reduce the number of in-school
18 suspensions, et cetera.

19 And "The Daily News" uses the term in their
20 editorials, I love, it said, restorative justice,
21 or, something.

22 Can you comment on that, and how that is part
23 of the mayoral-control issue?

24 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Yes, thank you very
25 much, Senator.

1 I'll start.

2 And I know the Chancellor certainly has
3 strong views on this as well.

4 We believe that the important thing is to
5 keep kids safe, and that you can keep kids safe the
6 same time as creating a respectful environment, an
7 environment where we choose the right disciplinary
8 tools.

9 We do not choose tools that are unfair or
10 discriminatory.

11 We do not choose tools that undermine the
12 education process.

13 That we really figure out the appropriate way
14 to create both discipline and to keep a child
15 learning.

16 So, suspensions -- I'm just going to give you
17 some facts I think say -- speak volumes, from the
18 2011 to 2012 school year, versus the last school
19 year, 2014 to 2015; so, three-year span.

20 Suspensions are down 36 percent.

21 Arrests are down 68 percent.

22 Summonses are down 72 percent.

23 All crime in schools down 29 percent.

24 Major crimes down 25 percent.

25 Now, the experts I refer to when I give you

1 this information, are the NYPD and the School Safety
2 Division.

3 The State of New York has a different way of
4 keeping track of incidents, which we respect, but
5 don't believe indicates the reality as well as the
6 NYPD's statistics.

7 We think this is a better picture of what's
8 going on in our schools; that the kinds of things
9 that used to plague our schools have been greatly
10 reduced; at the same time, we've enabled to approach
11 discipline in a way that is more fair, less
12 discriminatory, more conducive to education.

13 So, I find that a lot of the criticism is
14 based on a misreading of the facts.

15 And, you know, again, I -- it's interesting
16 that some -- some people, some commentators, like to
17 invoke NYPD statistics when it's convenient to their
18 cause, and then, suddenly, forget to look at them
19 when it's not convenient to their cause.

20 Well, I go to those statistics regularly, and
21 they prove that this approach is working well for
22 our schools.

23 Chancellor, would you like to?

24 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Well, I think one
25 of the most important things that we learned is that

1 suspensions were unequal around the city, depending
2 on, school by school, race by race, gender by
3 gender.

4 So one of the things we have tried very hard
5 to do is to make suspensions more uniform: What is
6 the right reason to suspend a student?

7 We have had students suspended for 10 days
8 because they were wearing a hat in class, versus
9 another school where that one might be a minor
10 offense, or something.

11 So I think we really are working very hard to
12 develop a universal decision on what's suspendible,
13 what is the right amount of days.

14 I would never, never, say you can't suspend a
15 student, but you have to have a really -- a series
16 of steps.

17 We have put in, into many of our schools,
18 more restorative justice practice, which simply
19 means hiring an outside agency, like, you know,
20 Morningside, PBIS; strategies that are proven by
21 research, that have been training teachers.

22 They can do a better job of calming students
23 down and dealing with students in a different way.

24 The other thing we've done, is we've started
25 to retrain our school safety agents, so that instead

1 of escalating issues in some schools, they can
2 deescalate issues.

3 You know, the idea of having students talk to
4 teachers in small groups, having school safety
5 agents join and get to know the kids who are most
6 problematic, before they have do something like
7 giving them a warrant or suspension.

8 I was a principal for 10 years.

9 In my 10 years I suspended one student.

10 Mostly in the cases, and I had kids who did
11 some really strange things, but, my first strategy
12 was to bring the parents in; to get some kind of
13 sense, what's going on in the home?

14 Is there a different kind of discussion?

15 Maybe this child needs to see the guidance
16 counselor.

17 I'm not a feel-good kind of person most of
18 the time.

19 Does he need to see the guidance counselor
20 once a week so we can get to the root of the
21 problem?

22 Suspending a child, to put them out in the
23 street, or to put them (indiscernible), is not going
24 to change the behavior.

25 So we need to look at, what is the behavior,

1 what's causing the behavior, and then what's the
2 appropriate measure?

3 Principals are, by law, and I expect
4 superintendents -- and I called a few
5 (indiscernible) on this -- to report it in what they
6 call "ORS."

7 There's an ORS system, where you have --
8 OLRs -- all these initials -- where you put in a
9 suspension, and then you call it in. And if it's a
10 high-level suspension, you have to get permission.

11 But any principal --

12 And, by all means, you know, they can
13 certainly call me. They call me on everything.

14 -- this happened in my school, and I wasn't
15 allowed to do something.

16 I don't buy it is a very frequent occurrence.

17 But I do believe we have to invest a lot more
18 time and energy -- and that's what we're doing with
19 the mental health -- in retraining teachers on how
20 to deal with kids who have real serious issues.

21 By the same token, there are kids who need to
22 be suspended.

23 Or, they had -- we just had an issue two
24 weeks ago, where we removed a student from a school,
25 never to go back again. Not just a suspension, but

1 will never go back to that school.

2 So I do think there was a lot of work to be
3 done.

4 But I do agree with the Mayor, that the City
5 and the State are not using the same measures, and
6 we need to get on the same page, because sometimes
7 what you read in the newspapers itself is
8 half-truths, and we need to all be able to use the
9 same language and the same measures across the
10 board.

11 SENATOR STAVISKY: We're not talking about a
12 student wearing a hat.

13 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: I understand.

14 But, also --

15 SENATOR STAVISKY: I mean, I taught for
16 almost seven years. I, obviously, never -- I never
17 really had a disciplinary problem.

18 But, when you do have a disruptive child,
19 it's not just the one child. It's the entire class
20 that's affected.

21 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Absolutely.

22 But that's why we need to do the retraining.

23 SENATOR STAVISKY: Let me rephrase the
24 question, real quick.

25 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Okay.

1 SENATOR STAVISKY: Then we can assume that
2 supervisors and teachers are not being told that
3 they can't report disciplinary issues?

4 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Absolutely not.

5 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

6 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: No.

7 And by the way, we have, at every borough
8 field office, a -- people called "student support
9 services.

10 And they -- and one of the things that -- we
11 just did an in-house evaluation of some of these
12 services.

13 And what they're saying to us is that,
14 they're very good at being -- when principals call
15 them, they're good at deescalating issues. But what
16 we need to do more of, is how do we prevent these
17 issues?

18 And one of the things -- I mean, it's
19 corollary, although it's not necessarily tied in,
20 I think, May 17th, we're having a day called
21 "Team-Up Day, where we've asked, I think,
22 300-some-odd schools in the city to team up with
23 their local precincts, so we can start looking at
24 bringing people into the schools to talk to kids
25 about the correct behaviors, and how do you look at

1 the police officers?

2 And the same thing, we are having an awards
3 ceremony, actually, this week, for school safety
4 agents that have gone above and beyond to create a
5 culture in their schools of productive climate, so
6 we can deescalate and prevent.

7 But, by all means, if something serious is
8 wrong, then, by all means, you've got to go to the
9 extreme.

10 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Yeah, Senator, just a
11 quick addition.

12 Thank you again for your service to the
13 New York City schools.

14 But, I was a public school parent --

15 SENATOR STAVISKY: So was I.

16 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: -- for the entire time
17 of both my kids' public education.

18 I'm very familiar with the fact, if there was
19 a disruptive child in the classroom, it can affect
20 everyone.

21 We don't want an absence of reporting. We
22 want everything reported.

23 We're saying, the solution, as the Chancellor
24 just said powerfully, from her, you know, 50-year
25 career as an educator, sometimes you need a

1 suspension.

2 There's a lot of times when there's another
3 tool.

4 We want to know anything that's going on.

5 We want to engage the parents --

6 I'm going to give you a traditional thought
7 here.

8 -- you know, engage the parents to help us
9 address the issue with their child.

10 So, it must be addressed and resolved.

11 We just don't believe suspension should be
12 used as often as it was in the past.

13 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

14 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Senator Peralta.

15 SENATOR PERALTA: Thank you.

16 First and foremost, I want to congratulate
17 you, Mr. Mayor, and Chancellor:

18 For the 20 percent increase in graduation
19 rates since mayoral control has been implemented;

20 The 92 percent attendance increase in the
21 last decade, which has been the highest;

22 The decrease in the dropout rate, which is
23 down to 9 percent;

24 And the huge success of pre-K.

25 I want to congratulate you on those issues.

1 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Thank you very much.

2 SENATOR PERALTA: I have a two-part question,
3 and I think it goes to the heart of why we're here.

4 First, do you believe that -- since we,
5 representatives on the state level, are, in a way,
6 investors, since we invest a large amount of money
7 into the educational system, both on the operational
8 and on the capital end, and since we also represent
9 hundreds of thousands of constituents in the city
10 and outside of the city of New York, do you believe
11 that we should have, as a body, an opportunity to
12 hold you, the Mayor, accountable every couple of
13 years on mayoral control?

14 And if you do, if that's the case, if you
15 believe that we should have that right, since we are
16 investing large amounts of money on the educational
17 system, why the seven years; the seven years that
18 you're requesting?

19 And I understand that you -- some of your --
20 part of your answer may be based on what your
21 predecessor got, but, some may argue that it was
22 seven years too long, what your predecessor got.

23 So, why the seven years?

24 Why not two or three years, for example,
25 where you can have mayoral control go into a year

1 after a certain mayor becomes mayor?

2 So, as opposed to giving seven years, where
3 we will not have -- and I understand, you know,
4 you -- benefit of the doubt, and being optimistic,
5 you would hope you would get reelected.

6 But let's just say that, God forbid, that you
7 don't get reelected, and there's someone else that
8 becomes mayor.

9 Then, if we give seven years, what -- we
10 won't have an opportunity to talk to that particular
11 mayor in seven years, until after that mayor is up.

12 So, why not have it two or three years,
13 instead of the seven that you're requesting?

14 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Well, Senator, I would
15 differentiate the ability to talk as an investor and
16 as partners, which I was happy to do, for example,
17 at the budget hearing, and I'm happy to be doing
18 now.

19 And I think that's a good and normal part of
20 the process, that we work together, all of us.

21 I -- you know, I said at the beginning, we
22 couldn't achieve what we achieved on pre-K without
23 all of you, we couldn't achieve what we achieved on
24 after-school without all of you.

25 We should be in a constant dialogue.

1 And I'm very happy to account for what we've
2 achieved, and take the questions, and talk it
3 through any time.

4 But, that's a different question than the
5 governance structure, in my view.

6 The governance structure should rise above
7 any question of who the person elected is, or what
8 party they're a member of, or what their ideology
9 is.

10 As I said at the beginning, what an
11 interesting situation that unites, you know,
12 Michael Bloomberg, Rudy Giuliani, and me.

13 We all agree, we're absolutely in lockstep,
14 that mayoral control is the right way to get things
15 done for the kids, and that it creates the most
16 essential accountability we can ask for in the
17 government: hold one person accountable, and the
18 public can hire or fire that person.

19 In my view -- and the other point is, that
20 it's far superior to what was there before, and
21 there no third way.

22 There is -- I've not heard a single offer of
23 an alternative system that would work better.

24 So when I add up all those pieces, I would
25 say to you, it was authorized for seven years,

1 renewed for six more.

2 We believe that that seven-year mark proved
3 to be very successful; that the experience the first
4 seven years of mayoral control were unquestionably,
5 a success.

6 And, that the numbers that we've presented
7 today on graduation rate and test scores and
8 increased safety in the schools, et cetera, started
9 with my predecessor -- even though we had our
10 disagreements -- we've been able to build on it, and
11 add a whole host of new elements, is a proof point
12 about why mayoral control works.

13 So I would argue that, mayoral control, as a
14 governing system, should be ratified for a
15 substantial amount of time so we can keep the work
16 of helping our kids moving.

17 But, in terms of the constant dialogue that
18 we should be in, either in a group setting like
19 this, or individual settings, of course I believe in
20 that simultaneously.

21 What I wouldn't want to see, and I think your
22 question very fairly raises kind of a
23 counter-reality, which is, that the decisions were
24 made based on who won an election or what their
25 philosophy is.

1 Well, the people of New York City are
2 responsible for making that decision.

3 We're in a representative government, but
4 we -- you know, we, ultimately, all defer to the
5 people.

6 If the people choose mayoral control because
7 they support a candidate who believes in mayoral
8 control, or the people choose a certain course for
9 our schools, that's their choice.

10 And I would hope we're gonna work with the
11 person who wins in either situation, whether they're
12 in our party or not.

13 SENATOR PERALTA: Thank you.

14 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Thank you.

15 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Senator Hoylman.

16 SENATOR HOYLMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

17 Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you for
18 holding this hearing.

19 I think it's very important that we have
20 public hearings on such important issues.

21 After all, we are discussing the future of
22 our economy, and the basis upon which we operate a
23 deliberative democracy; so there's really nothing
24 more important than the management of our public
25 school system.

1 I wanted to point out to you that we've not
2 really heard from a single individual here, other
3 than, perhaps, some polling data that shows that
4 some New Yorkers are split on the idea of mayoral
5 control.

6 But all of the information you've presented
7 today points in the other direction, and very
8 strongly so.

9 And as my colleague just mentioned,
10 graduation rates up 20 percent under the model of
11 mayoral control.

12 Attendance rates, academic performance, the
13 big ideas that you're able to push through, like
14 pre-K, the wonderful progress you've made in
15 community schools.

16 By the way, my daughter now wears eyeglasses,
17 prescribed to her at age 5, because of your program
18 for vision in the schools.

19 And, the increase in parental involvement,
20 something I hear as a public school parent.

21 The statistic you show is 38 percent
22 improvement.

23 But one thing that I think it's almost hard
24 to put your finger on is the fact that mayoral
25 control has, in my opinion, reduced the level of

1 rancor and dissension and antagonism among a number
2 of stakeholders that are so important to the
3 management of our school system.

4 Whether it be our teachers, whether it be our
5 administrators, our public school parents, the local
6 community, the fact that you were able to present a
7 coherent, logical, and responsive management
8 structure, I think gives a lot of New Yorkers
9 confidence that, if they do have a problem, they
10 know where to go.

11 So I wanted to point that out to you as
12 something that isn't as tangible.

13 And also wanted to point out that mayoral
14 control is working all across the country.

15 There are cities, Mr. Chair -- the Center for
16 American Progress recently released a report that
17 shows that there were resource-management and
18 student-achievement gains in cities, not just
19 New York; New Haven, Connecticut; Chicago;
20 Philadelphia; Baltimore; Hartford; Harrisburg;
21 Boston; Providence, Rhode Island.

22 So, this isn't such a shocking revelation,
23 today, that your success has been sustained and
24 tangible. I think we're seeing it all across the
25 country.

1 So, I guess I'll close with a question about
2 how you think we -- you know, what -- what your
3 interaction has been with some of the people who
4 have the biggest stake in the future of our school
5 system, which are big employers.

6 And I know we have a witness list of a number
7 of folks from the business community who are going
8 to speak on behalf of mayoral control.

9 What are they saying about it?

10 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Well, thank you very
11 much, Senator, for the question.

12 I have been very struck by how strongly
13 business leaders feel we need mayoral control of
14 education. It's very consistent.

15 And I -- again, to Senator Peralta's
16 question, these are some people who agree with me on
17 a number of areas, there's some people who disagree
18 with me on a number of areas, but still believe,
19 fundamentally, that we need coherent governance, we
20 need accountability.

21 I think they use their own values, in terms
22 of management, and look at this, and it much more
23 resembles what they would do within their own
24 organizations in terms of clear lines of authority,
25 real accountability measures, consequences if things

1 don't work.

2 And, so, I've been very appreciative of the
3 support we've received of a widespread swath of the
4 business community.

5 The technology sector is a great example,
6 where there are, you know, 300,000 jobs in
7 New York City.

8 I would dare say tremendously important to
9 the future of New York State, that that technology
10 sector continue to grow in New York City.

11 The technology-sector leaders have been
12 adamant that they need our school system to become
13 more and more effective, and they believe in issues
14 like Computer Science For All and pre-K, but they
15 understand these things have to happen quickly and
16 urgently, and that can only happen through a
17 mayoral-control system.

18 So the -- you know, we have come to, all of
19 us assume that we're living in a very partisan age,
20 but, there are moments where people agree, and there
21 are moments where people agree across partisan
22 lines.

23 You'll see, in addition to the business
24 support, tremendous support from labor.

25 Again, is it a perfect consensus? No.

1 But I can say, you know, with a certain rye
2 smile on my face, that consensus is a hard thing to
3 come by in New York City.

4 And in the scheme of things, this is an area
5 where I think there's more agreement than most in
6 public policy.

7 And, certainly, a lot of very serious people
8 care deeply about the future of New York City,
9 really are deeply involved in this effort to
10 preserve mayoral control and strengthen it for the
11 future.

12 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: And I just want to
13 add, that since I've been through every system in
14 50 years, there was a time when the time of
15 chancellors was two years or less because, if there
16 was a public disagreement, it destabilized the
17 system.

18 And I worked under many chancellors -- and
19 I liked a lot of them -- and they were here today,
20 gone tomorrow, because there was a disagreement
21 publicly.

22 And it meant that all the principals were a
23 little bit, What do we do now? Or the teachers were
24 unsettled.

25 You need stability. You need consistency.

1 You need to say, these are the promises I made,
2 these are promises I'll keep.

3 And it's been a constant shovel across this
4 county, the average tenure of superintendents is
5 2 1/2 years. And that says a lot about the
6 instability of education.

7 So I believe this is not just about because
8 it's the right thing to do. It's because the people
9 in the trenches -- the teachers, the principals --
10 need that stability.

11 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: And one more point on
12 that, our whole school system has needed that
13 stability for a long time.

14 And that's why I think it's important that
15 people have guarantees that there was going to be a
16 governing structure they can depend on.

17 You know, that's -- I think what we would
18 yearn for, for the future, is an even more stable,
19 professional, effective approach to education;
20 something that often eluded us in the past.

21 But people knowing that the governance
22 structure is set and now we can get to work,
23 deepening the reforms, deepening the improvements,
24 I think that's the best thing for all the people who
25 are trying to educate our kids.

1 SENATOR HOYLMAN: As a public school parent
2 of a 5-year-old, I just wanted to tell you how
3 appreciative I am, and keep up the good work.

4 And, for the record, I strongly support
5 continuing mayoral reform, Mr. Chair.

6 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Thank you.

7 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you, Senator.

8 Senator DeFrancisco.

9 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Before I ask any
10 questions, I just want to express my great dismay
11 that Senator Hoylman didn't bring his daughter to an
12 ophthalmologist or an optometrist, or someone,
13 before she went to school.

14 I mean, she had to rely on a public
15 institution to find out she needed eyeglasses.

16 SENATOR HOYLMAN: Can I point out, if I may,
17 I did, and they missed the diagnosis.

18 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Oh.

19 SENATOR HOYLMAN: It was the public school
20 system that found it.

21 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Oh, okay. Very good.

22 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: One more point for
23 us. Thank you.

24 [Applause.]

25 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: And, actually,

1 you're in a phenomenal school as well.

2 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Very good.

3 And, did you sue the ophthalmologist for
4 malpractice?

5 SENATOR HOYLMAN: That's your job, not mine.

6 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Oh, oh, wow.

7 Well, I won't answer that.

8 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

9 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: But, specifically,
10 I had a few questions.

11 You had mentioned -- it's been mentioned a
12 couple of times since I've been here, that
13 there's -- there's only two systems, the old system
14 and this system, as far as mayoral control.

15 Can you just refresh my memory?

16 In the old system, for example, in a
17 teacher's contract, who did the negotiations, and
18 who made the decision as to the outcome?

19 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I'll let the
20 Chancellor speak to it, having lived in all levels
21 of the old system.

22 I can certainly affirm to you, it was not the
23 mayor.

24 But go ahead, Chancellor.

25 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: No, the

1 negotiations were always done as part of the larger
2 DOE, whatever the central unit was, and it was done
3 for the whole city.

4 But it was not -- I don't believe the mayor
5 was ever involved.

6 I really don't know about the negotiations
7 per se.

8 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Okay, but do you know
9 who made the final decision?

10 Was it the board that made the final
11 decision?

12 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Most likely.

13 There were actually four different systems.

14 When I started teaching, there was a total
15 centralize. No decisions were made that were not
16 made at the infamous 110 Livingston Street.
17 Everything was decided there.

18 Then we went to community school boards, but
19 no community school board negotiated their own
20 contracts. This was all done centrally again.

21 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Centrally, under the
22 education department; not -- by the mayor's
23 education department?

24 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: The chancellor --

25 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: The chancellor -- the

1 board chose the chancellor -- no, the board chose
2 the chancellor.

3 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: The chancellor did
4 not get involved in most of the negotiations.

5 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: So somebody did,
6 somebody made the decision.

7 Does anybody know?

8 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: It was a mess --
9 I love this.

10 It was a messy three-way negotiation.

11 And, generally -- you know, I also lived
12 through the 1968 teachers strike.

13 There was a lot of dissension in a lot of the
14 other systems.

15 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Three-way negotiation.

16 Who were the three parties?

17 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Well, I would say,
18 the mayor's office, the board of trustees at the
19 central office, and the unions.

20 That would be three-ways.

21 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Okay, so, ultimately
22 would the mayor have to give the okay for that
23 salary increase?

24 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I did not participate
25 in that element of the system, so I don't want to

1 give you a specific answer.

2 What I can say, I want to restate what I said
3 at the beginning:

4 The current system, with pure mayoral
5 control, pure accountability, when it comes to
6 negotiation of the contract, like every other labor
7 contract, my Office of Labor Relations negotiates,
8 and I have to approve on behalf of the people.

9 That was just not the case under the previous
10 system. It was not as clear as that.

11 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Okay. And just a
12 suggestion: We might want to get a chair for this
13 guy, because he's jumping up and down here.

14 And he's certainly capable of sitting at the
15 big table.

16 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I would agree with
17 that, and I'm confused why he isn't, Senator.

18 I appreciate that.

19 Because he was at the budget hearings.

20 So, I don't know understand why was -- he
21 left us.

22 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Okay.

23 Now --

24 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Senator Felder is
25 taking direct action.

1 Thank you, Senator.

2 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: All right.

3 Now, following up on it: So the latest
4 contract that was negotiated was by the Mayor's
5 Office.

6 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Of Labor Relations.

7 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: And the
8 Chancellor.

9 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: And the Chancellor.

10 Now, please just explain, briefly, what the
11 new contract was, 2014 was it negotiated?

12 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Yes.

13 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Okay. I see salary
14 increases for 2013, 1 percent; '14, 1 percent;
15 '15, 1 percent; '16, 1.5 percent; '17, 2.5 percent;
16 '18, 3 percent; which is somewhat comparable to at
17 least those contracts that have been negotiated for
18 other units.

19 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Correct.

20 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Okay. What I don't
21 understand, and -- is, then there's lump-sum
22 payments.

23 Two -- ten thousand -- 2015, 12 1/2 percent;
24 '17, 12 1/2 percent; '18, '19, and '20, 25 percent
25 each.

1 What does that mean?

2 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I'm going to explain
3 in broad terms, because, one, I'm not a lawyer; two,
4 I'm not a labor-relations specialist. But -- and
5 we'll certainly have, if you'd like, our
6 commissioner go into detail, but I'll give you the
7 broad stroke.

8 So when we came into office, as you may know,
9 we had none of our --

10 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Can I interrupt you,
11 because there's a lot of people?

12 You've approved the contract.

13 You must at least -- these lump-sum payments,
14 they must mean something.

15 And what do they -- 25 percent of, what?

16 And how does that affect the annual increases
17 in these later years?

18 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Yeah, so I'm going to
19 do my best, two years later, to give you the right
20 summary.

21 When I came into office, there were no labor
22 contracts settled. We had, the entire workforce was
23 not under contract.

24 Now, I believe you and I might share a
25 classification as fiscally responsible.

1 And, so, the mandate I gave my team was, we
2 needed to settle the contracts.

3 It was not appropriate to have our workforce
4 not under contract, but we had to do it in a way
5 that was fiscally prudent, because this was going to
6 have a long-term impact on the city.

7 In fact, the uncertainty of our labor
8 relations being unresolved was creating a huge
9 question mark for budget monitors, rating agencies,
10 et cetera, and for the future of the city.

11 So I said, I need long-term contracts.
12 I need them to be fiscally-sound.

13 Remembering that different unions had their
14 contracts expired at different moments, to construct
15 a pathway to resolution was a little different for
16 each union.

17 But what we said was, once we established a
18 clear pattern, we were going to stick to it; so, of
19 course, we wanted a pattern that we thought was
20 responsible.

21 In the first instance, the teacher contract
22 was the first major contract. We put together a
23 combination of pieces to get to a fair outcome.

24 And then every contract thereafter was
25 patterned on it.

1 Because there were out-years, back-years,
2 that were farther back than almost any other union,
3 we had to construct a way to compensate for those
4 past years.

5 So that's where some of those elements were
6 included.

7 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Okay, I get it. I get
8 it.

9 But, in 2015, there was a lump sum of
10 12.5 percent of, what?

11 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Okay, and what I do
12 not ever want to do is give you a detail I cannot
13 specifically explain, so I will get a letter from
14 our Labor Relations commissioner, detailing each
15 element of the contract deal.

16 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Okay, but, one of the
17 issues, obviously, we are at a point where we're
18 determining whether to continue mayoral control.

19 And, if there is something that's done while
20 there was mayoral control, maybe that could change
21 somebody's mind that maybe you're not as fiscally
22 sound as you may think you are.

23 And since we're sending so much money out
24 every year at the State, I think it's a relevant
25 issue.

1 So when I see a 1 percent increase in 2015,
2 but then see 12.5 percent lump sum of "something,"
3 sounds a hell of a lot more than 1 percent.

4 And then when it gets to be 25 percent of
5 "something" in 2019, it's -- 2018, it's certainly
6 more than the 3 percent.

7 So that would be pretty important to me.

8 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I appreciate that, and
9 I agree with you.

10 I would say it this way:

11 When that contract was agreed upon, I think
12 it was May of 2014, it got an immense amount of
13 scrutiny from rating agencies, from fiscal monitors,
14 from all levels of government.

15 And the response to it also included an
16 unprecedented amount of health-care savings, which,
17 as you know, is one of the number-one areas we have
18 to address if we're going to create fiscal stability
19 for the long term.

20 I can safely say to you that, across the
21 spectrum, and this also was I think true in the
22 business community, there was a sense that it was a
23 fair contract.

24 And we'll get you the exact delineation of
25 it, because those specific elements do not reflect

1 the salary dynamics.

2 I want you to see the salary progression
3 narrowly.

4 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Can you at least
5 answer, 25 percent of, what?

6 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Again, I'm -- in the
7 interest of making sure I never give you an
8 imprecise answer, I'm not going to offer --

9 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Maybe this guy knows.

10 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Sherif, do you want to
11 give an answer?

12 I would welcome you into the proceedings.

13 SHERIF SOLIMAN: I don't have an answer handy
14 at the moment.

15 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: But maybe
16 Commissioner Lynn can give you the detail.

17 But I think the important point is this:

18 We -- I don't think there's any local
19 government in the country that goes through more
20 scrutiny than we do.

21 We put together a labor deal. It was very
22 strongly affirmed across the spectrum, and then
23 became the pattern for all the other deals, which
24 has, ultimately, saved the taxpayer a lot of money
25 and allowed us fiscal stability.

1 And I'm happy to go into more detail.

2 I'll get the whole contract, and we're happy
3 to discuss it with you.

4 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Okay. That's great.

5 Number -- the only other area I want to get
6 into -- I have a bunch of questions, but there's a
7 lot of people here -- relating to charter schools.

8 There was a requirement, I guess, that you --
9 if space is available, I guess, there was
10 co-location that's required.

11 Since this requirement went into effect, do
12 you have an estimate as to how many charter schools
13 were denied the ability to co-locate in a school?

14 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: We can get you the
15 list of who applied and what the outcome was.

16 There's been a number of charter schools that
17 we have co-located.

18 There have been some that, for the specific
19 proposal, we could not fulfill as it was requested.
20 In many cases, we found an alternative.

21 We've said from the beginning, we're going to
22 work with charter schools.

23 We do ask them to work with us as well,
24 because we have a set of standards that we have to
25 achieve.

1 By the way, and we talked earlier about the
2 pre-K initiative, where we had very strong
3 participation from our charter schools; very
4 successful.

5 So, a lot of resources are going into our
6 charter schools from the City budget, but we
7 continue to make co-location decisions, and trying
8 to accommodate them when we can.

9 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Very few were
10 actually denied. And in some of the cases,
11 specifically, was that they might not have been as
12 inclusive as they should have.

13 We expect a school to serve a fair amount of
14 special-needs kids and English-language learners.

15 But I think, at this point, we're working
16 much more cooperatively, and working in a good way,
17 with most of our charter schools.

18 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Okay, last question is:
19 If we could get this information, I think, on some
20 cases, there was an appeals process.

21 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Absolutely.

22 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: So some cases, if the
23 City, for whatever reason, believed it was not
24 appropriate for a co-location, an appeal -- so it
25 was denied, so then the school appeals.

1 I'd like to find out what percentage of those
2 appeals were successful on behalf of the charter
3 schools, to get an idea of whether --

4 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: I'll get back to
5 you on that.

6 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Yes, so -- and all of
7 this, you know, you're referring to the 2014 law
8 change.

9 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Right.

10 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: So we'll get you the
11 statistics from that -- beginning of that following
12 school year, till now.

13 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Exactly.

14 Okay. I -- well, I better stop at this
15 point; but, thank you.

16 I appreciate it.

17 And, God bless you.

18 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: God bless you,
19 Senator.

20 Thank you.

21 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Senator Krueger.

22 SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you very much,
23 Mr. Mayor. Thank you for your testimony.

24 So many of my colleagues have pointed out the
25 things I wanted to ask you about, so it will be a

1 little shorter.

2 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Senator Montgomery.

3 SENATOR KRUEGER: No, not that short, Carl.

4 You know not to challenge me like that.

5 Again, I want to highlight the appreciation
6 that so many of us have for the statistical
7 improvements in the New York City Public School
8 System, both, under your tenure, and, in fact,
9 under the previous tenure of Mayor Bloomberg,
10 because I think most of us do realize, when you look
11 at the data, when you track what's happening in
12 New York City public schools under mayoral-control
13 model versus the previous model, it's clearly a
14 better model.

15 I don't think any of us, I don't think you
16 would probably think, it's a perfect model, as one
17 might argue it's almost impossible to come up with a
18 perfect public education system in this country.

19 But I know, speaking from my district, my
20 parents feel very strongly that the schools continue
21 to improve.

22 You know, the irony for my district is just
23 the continuing fight for space to put more kids,
24 because parents are choosing to stay in the city of
25 New York, choosing public schools for their

1 children, making more demands on your
2 administration, on Chancellor Fariña, every day,
3 because they believe in the public school system,
4 and so they want better, because there isn't a
5 parent in this country who doesn't want better for
6 their children.

7 So, ironically, nothing causes more problems
8 than success, because everybody just keeps coming to
9 you with, and now we need X, and now we need Y, and
10 now we need Z.

11 And I think that that's right, and it
12 reflects the fact that people have a commitment to
13 both our city and to our public school system.

14 I also, just for the record, want to say,
15 I support mayoral control, even though I might
16 fiddle with some things in it.

17 But I want to highlight the importance of
18 this Legislature, not continuing to play the game of
19 giving you one-year extensions.

20 There is no way to plan for a public school
21 system for over a million children, not knowing,
22 from year to year to year, whether or not your
23 entire system is going to go into legal collapse
24 every 12 months.

25 So I urge my colleagues who are here today to

1 recognize the importance of not allowing
2 New York City to be left on a ledge that is
3 particularly unhealthy for a public education
4 system.

5 So to turn this into a question: What would
6 it mean if we, literally, kept going at a
7 year-to-year model, for the City and the Department
8 of Education?

9 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: It creates
10 instability, and it means that, as you're trying to
11 do big changes, which we're trying to do everything,
12 we're trying to improve the schools, fundamentally,
13 over years and years.

14 I gave that example of getting all our kids
15 to third-grade reading level over the next 10 years.

16 A massive endeavor. It's never been
17 attempted before.

18 Anything that stands in the way of it is a
19 disservice to our children.

20 So if we don't even know what our governance
21 structure will be in a year, it does not allow us to
22 achieve all that we need to achieve. It doesn't
23 allow us to put all the focus that we need to put
24 into continually deepening these initiatives.

25 And I think -- I appreciate your point a

1 lot -- to what end?

2 You know, if there were an alternative on the
3 table that was better, I would debate that any day.

4 But since I have not heard anyone come
5 forward and say, you know: The system we want to
6 use is X. Let's show why you that is a better
7 system.

8 It feels, a lot of times, like one-hand
9 clapping.

10 Here's a system that has produced stunning
11 results in 13 years' time.

12 If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

13 Let's deepen our commitment to it, and let's
14 get to work fixing these big challenges in our
15 schools.

16 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: It's jut focus
17 time.

18 You know, every time you have to explain
19 something, you spend two days preparing.

20 It's like the paperwork that principals do,
21 it takes some time.

22 The time for a leader that's an education
23 leader is to be in schools, is to be talking to
24 parents.

25 And this is diversion, and I think we need to

1 stay based and focused on the work.

2 SENATOR KRUEGER: And I guess I would also
3 just highlight, the problem, if Albany chose to try
4 to micromanage public education in the city of
5 New York:

6 We can all give our examples of when we have
7 frustrations, even when dealing with the Department
8 of Education, or any other agency, in trying to get
9 things done.

10 But even my colleague John DeFrancisco's
11 questions about co-location clearly show, he's from
12 Syracuse, which I'm sure has all its own issues,
13 but, to understand at the neighborhood level, the
14 issues of co-location of schools, why it sometimes
15 works and why it sometimes doesn't, given the
16 geographic realities and the space realities of
17 schools, reflects the fact that Albany really
18 shouldn't be making those decisions.

19 I can speak for my district, where,
20 literally, the teachers and the parents and the
21 principals, in coordination, fight to the death to
22 keep bathroom space not being turned into
23 educational space in a few of our schools, because
24 they're so desperate for space.

25 And the concept that somebody outside of the

1 city of New York would dictate, no, no, no, you have
2 to make a decision to co-locate, just because
3 somebody else asked for the space, again, there are
4 certain roles for a state legislature, and they're
5 very important ones, and there are certain roles
6 that we have to leave to the local government, and
7 leave, in my opinion, to a model where it reports to
8 the mayor, and the mayor is held accountable for the
9 actions taken.

10 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: I'm going to
11 videotape you and use that, because I was just,
12 actually, in one of your schools in one of your
13 districts that is co-located.

14 But those principals chose to be co-located.
15 They decided ahead of time what they want to share
16 between them.

17 And in one particular case, there -- things
18 that they're sharing is their special emphasis on
19 special-needs kids, and they don't want them moving
20 from one school to the other.

21 So the elementary schools in the building,
22 very overcrowded. But, the middle school is also in
23 the building and taking on a large majority of the
24 kids.

25 So there are good things about co-location,

1 but local is the right way to go.

2 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: And just, finally,
3 Senator, that I agree with your statement.

4 I also agree, as I said with Senator Peralta,
5 that we should be in regular dialogue.

6 We are very happy to be in regular dialogue
7 with the Legislature because there should be a
8 partnership.

9 That's a different question from how to
10 manage the day-to-day, hour-to-hour, of a system
11 with 1.1 million kids.

12 But at the same time, we honor the fact that
13 we want to be in regular communication with the
14 state government about how we do things together.

15 SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you.

16 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

17 This is what this Committee is doing right
18 now. The fact of this hearing is a matter of
19 oversight.

20 We spend \$9 billion of the taxpayers' money,
21 we send to it the city of New York, and the
22 residents of the state of New York who pay that
23 money, who pay those tax dollars, because it doesn't
24 all come from the city, have an expectation that we
25 know what we're doing, and we're going to ask some

1 questions, which is what we're doing now.

2 We're trying to get information and clarify
3 issues and clear it up, because these people,
4 whether they live in the city or not, have to vote
5 on that \$9 billion, and they should do so with some
6 level of intelligence.

7 Senator Montgomery.

8 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Yes, thank you.

9 I want to first thank the Chair for holding
10 this hearing.

11 It is important, and for future generations,
12 what we do this year, and every year thereafter,
13 makes a huge difference for young people in our
14 state.

15 So, I appreciate this opportunity.

16 And I want to just say to you,
17 Mayor de Blasio, I want to thank you for all of the
18 positive things that have happened.

19 I must correct you in saying that, prior to
20 your becoming mayor, we did have some huge issues
21 and problems with the system, and it was based on
22 the few of the administration as it relates to
23 education policy.

24 So, I just want to make sure you understand,
25 you have made a difference.

1 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Thank you.

2 And if I may just interrupt briefly, you and
3 I agree on many, many of the areas where there were
4 real differences with the previous administration.

5 I think I can say, honorably and honestly,
6 there were areas of real achievement that we have
7 built upon, there were areas of real disagreement
8 we've tried to make major changes.

9 I don't feel any contradiction in
10 acknowledging those two realities.

11 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Thank you.

12 I do want to say, I've said publicly, and
13 privately, that the best thing that has happened, in
14 my opinion, to the education system in the city of
15 New York is Chancellor Fariña.

16 And as you know, the people who came to be
17 chancellor prior to her, I believe four chancellors
18 before her, all required a waiver, because they did
19 not possess what she has brought to the system.

20 So I want to compliment you on that.

21 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I agree with your
22 assessment entirely.

23 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Okay. Thank you.

24 So -- so, I just want to say now, we're
25 talking about, you mentioned the structure, and how

1 that is, obviously, related to policy, but,
2 certainly, we can do very much different with the
3 structure, and still maintain a level of excellence
4 and integrity, hopefully, depending on the
5 chancellor.

6 So my question to you is: If you are no
7 longer the mayor, and we do not have a mayor with
8 the same goals and interests that you have, and
9 vision that you have, and commitment that you have,
10 to the youngsters in the system; and, therefore,
11 you're not -- we won't have an opportunity to have a
12 "Chancellor Fariña" leading our system, maybe we'll
13 have another kind of business person, or someone who
14 really has -- doesn't have her level of expertise
15 and commitment and skill, how do we ensure that that
16 person, who was not -- does not have the same
17 commitments that you have, can -- we can depend on
18 that person to select a "Carmen Fariña"?

19 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Well, I appreciate the
20 question, and it's obviously a question about
21 democracy.

22 Look, I would argue, again, that this system
23 is the best way to achieve things for our children
24 regardless of who holds the mayoralty, because, at
25 a very minimum, it has helped to create efficiency,

1 it has helped to create reform, it has helped to end
2 some of the corruption, you know, that was so
3 consistent, sadly, in the old reality.

4 I believe that is just structurally true.

5 And I also think, as a matter of democracy,
6 if there's a single person in charge and that person
7 is in the glare of the lights every day, and I can
8 certainly attest to that fact, anything that
9 I decide in terms of our schools will get an immense
10 amount of scrutiny.

11 And, there's always consequences in public
12 life.

13 As you know, if you do something and the
14 public disagrees with you, even on a single issue,
15 it affects your ability as a leader to do any number
16 of other things.

17 So there's a constant feedback loop, a
18 constant accountability reality, separate even from
19 the ultimate accountability of elections.

20 I just believe that is structurally sounder,
21 and I don't believe there's any governance system
22 for schools that has been found to be better.

23 So the question then: What would happen if
24 someone came in with a different approach or
25 different philosophy?

1 Well, you know, I'm enough of a believer in
2 democracy to say, that person would have had to
3 argue that case to the people in the most
4 transparent era we've ever been in in the history of
5 humanity.

6 Because of digital media and everything else,
7 there is the most information available, and the
8 greatest opportunity for people to participate.

9 If someone comes in with a vision and wins an
10 election in that context, the people have spoken, is
11 my view, but then they will be held accountable
12 every day in a variety of ways.

13 And we're proud of having reinvigorated the
14 community education counsels.

15 We're proud to have a panel, a PEP, that is
16 vibrant, that debates issues, that often demands
17 changes and revisions.

18 So I think the current iteration, as we are
19 applying what you have granted with mayoral control,
20 is a more democratic one, a more rooted one in the
21 community.

22 And I believe history tells us, it's hard to
23 go back, in a good way; that, now, there is an
24 expectation of a PEP where these debates will take
25 place. There's an expectation of CECs that will

1 strongly advocate for the needs of communities.

2 There's an expectation that, every Saturday, you
3 know, CEC presidents are meeting with the
4 Chancellor.

5 It's hard to put those genies back in the
6 bottle, in a good way. The bar has been set higher.

7 I also believe, one last point on the
8 educator point, I'm very proud to have named the
9 first educator of the last five chancellors.

10 It was absolutely necessary.

11 You know it was something I pledged to the
12 people I would do.

13 I think that's going to be, also, a very big
14 pressure on whoever is, in the future, in the
15 mayoralty, to continue that tradition, because
16 Chancellor Fariña's results have been so positive,
17 but I think parents believe an educator should run
18 the school system.

19 So I think some of this goes beyond even any
20 one election.

21 It's something changing, I think, in the
22 expectations of the people and the parents.

23 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Quite frankly,
24 Mr. Mayor, I am looking at the presidential campaign
25 right now.

1 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Oh, touché.

2 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: And I have some real
3 fears about what we could end up with.

4 But not to belabor that.

5 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I'm sorry, just very
6 quickly: I do believe the labor -- the local level,
7 there's a much higher level of accountability, and a
8 very specific, tangible scrutiny at the local level
9 than what we are seeing.

10 And I hear your point loud and clear, on the
11 national level, but I think there's a difference.

12 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: I should hope so.

13 The -- the -- then the question that I have
14 to you two, related to the structure, is that people
15 seem to believe that any change in the current
16 system, any reform, you know, broadening the number
17 of decision, or appointments, that could be --
18 entities that could be appointing people to the PEP
19 or the board, or whatever, means that we now have to
20 go back to the old system of community school
21 boards.

22 I do not believe that.

23 In fact, the first part of the reform of the
24 mayoral -- the issue of restructuring the board, was
25 that we remove some of the -- some of the authority

1 of the community school boards, which I thought was
2 a good thing.

3 Then, when we moved to the point where the
4 mayor had so control of the entire system, because,
5 essentially, that's what we're talking about: Who
6 is the ultimate single authority?

7 And that now is you.

8 So, you make all decisions, including who is
9 the chancellor, and who the majority of the people
10 are on the PEP.

11 That is the problem that we have, because,
12 you are a mayor for four years, possibly eight
13 years.

14 We come in, then, with another mayor for
15 another period of time.

16 The last mayor was 12 years.

17 So, how can you then say that there is
18 accountability that is spread throughout the
19 structure?

20 And, can we make changes that do not require
21 going back to the community school board, but that
22 at least provide some level of accountability to the
23 people, and especially to the children of the
24 system, in our state?

25 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I believe there is

1 tremendous accountability right now.

2 I really very much respect the question, but,
3 again, the people make that decision in a way that
4 was never true before mayoral control.

5 And, you know, you and I, I'm sure both,
6 didn't always agree with the judgment of the people
7 on who should lead the city, but the people decided.

8 So, I think the much better approach is what
9 we have now.

10 Someone runs for mayor, lays out a vision.

11 They are responsible for achieving it.

12 They are held accountable every day.

13 Any misstep will be noted.

14 Any success, it would be nice if that's noted
15 too.

16 And then, you know, they have to see if they
17 get their employment contract renewed.

18 But, there's all sorts of pressures created
19 by all levels of government in terms of
20 accountability, created by the media, created by
21 parents, created by PEPs, created by CECs.

22 There's plenty of oversight, questioning,
23 scrutiny, critical thinking.

24 And I think it adds up to, and I can say,
25 having lived it now for almost 28 months, that it is

1 not, by any stretch of the imagination, sort of an
2 isolated dynamic, where someone in my role is making
3 decisions with no reference to all these other
4 voices and all these other concerns.

5 It's a constant daily reality of listening to
6 all the other stakeholders, and, ultimately, making
7 decisions.

8 But what I would argue is where we can't go
9 back, and it's not just a matter of the community
10 school boards.

11 We can't go back to a system where there was
12 not a person who makes the ultimate decision and can
13 make it in real time.

14 Because -- I know you agree with us on what
15 pre-K has meant, and I really appreciate your
16 support, and everyone's support here, for our pre-K
17 initiative.

18 There is no way on earth it could have been
19 achieved in two years if there wasn't enough
20 capacity, in terms of the decision-making and
21 driving an entire government to a goal.

22 If that was not held by the mayor, and the
23 mayor alone, it would not have worked.

24 The same with after-school, the same with
25 Computer Science For All, the same with AP in every

1 high school, it just wouldn't have worked.

2 I can say it for a fact.

3 And, the proof is in the pudding of what
4 happened before.

5 Look how many times, as the Chancellor
6 described, there was no stability in our school
7 system, things didn't move.

8 We had horribly low levels of achievement.

9 Folks who were underprivileged to begin with
10 got more underprivileged in our schools.

11 And, chancellors were constantly cycling in
12 and out.

13 And, there was no forward motion in the
14 greatest city in the country.

15 So, our schools were not the greatest. Our
16 governance was not the greatest.

17 Today, by contrast, we are in a position to
18 be a national leader on education, and reach people
19 in a way we never had before, and address inequity
20 in a way we never did before.

21 That requires urgency.

22 You cannot achieve urgency if there isn't an
23 ultimate decision-maker.

24 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: And just I -- having
25 lived through the other -- the prior administration

1 under this system that we have, the mayoral control,
2 there was so much upheaval in the system, that it
3 was just an incredible experience.

4 So, you have brought stability, but, I'm not
5 sure that this, that what we have, offers us in
6 future years, and for future generations, the kind
7 of stability that you're talking about, unless the
8 person brings to that position a commitment to that.

9 But I will just -- one last issue that
10 I would like to raise with you.

11 We talk about issues around services to
12 children, and the 94 schools, in particular, that
13 are the --

14 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: The renewal schools?

15 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: -- the renewal schools.

16 I want to thank you, and I love the
17 community-school programs, and all of those things
18 that you've done, that have made a difference.

19 And I'm very much aware they came because of
20 our Chancellor.

21 So I want to thank the Chancellor, right
22 here.

23 But, I just want to ask you: How many of
24 those 94 schools have a school-based health clinic
25 that provides health and mental-health services to

1 the children in those schools?

2 SENATOR MARCELLINO: We'll get you the exact
3 numerical quote, unless one of my colleagues has it
4 now.

5 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: We will have
6 (indiscernible).

7 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: I would appreciate that.

8 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Let me just clarify
9 that.

10 The goal for all -- renewal schools are also
11 community schools, under our model.

12 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Yes.

13 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: And the goal for all
14 our community schools, which is an initiative that's
15 really taken shape over the last year or two, is
16 that physical and mental-health capacity be embedded
17 into every school.

18 It's part of what I think is so powerful
19 about the community-school concept, is to be able to
20 address what, you know, we were talking earlier,
21 about the eyeglasses.

22 Whether it's an eyesight issue, which we
23 know, historically, many good, young people weren't
24 diagnosed with having an eyesight problem, that held
25 them back, educationally.

1 Young people who had dyslexia, no one figured
2 it out until it was too late.

3 Or -- so, physical things, but also
4 mental-health challenges.

5 So, right now, there was some capacity, but
6 the idea is, in every school, to have substantial
7 capacity, both on the mental-health and the
8 physical-health side, in all community schools, ergo
9 all renewal schools.

10 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Thank you for that.

11 And I just want to, again, say "thank you" to
12 the Chancellor for the vision that you've brought,
13 and the hard work that you do, to make this system
14 really work, and be responsive to the children.

15 So, thank you.

16 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Thank you.

17 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Thanks, Mayor.

18 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Senator Comrie.

19 SENATOR COMRIE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

20 Good afternoon, Mr. Mayor, and Chancellor.

21 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Good afternoon.

22 SENATOR COMRIE: Appreciate you being here
23 all day to listen to our concerns.

24 And, I want to thank the Chair for holding
25 the meeting, and it is an issue that impacts

1 everyone in the state.

2 I want to align myself with the -- some of
3 the comments that Senator Montgomery said, in terms
4 of the fact that you have raised the bar by hiring
5 an excellent chancellor to govern the system, and to
6 ensure that there was a better level of discourse.

7 She has truly changed the focus and made it
8 better, in many ways, for people to communicate with
9 the Chancellor directly.

10 And I want to applaud you and the Chancellor
11 for everything that you've done since you've
12 arrived, to try to improve the mayoral-control
13 system.

14 As you know, I represent southeast Queens,
15 and we have many schools in the district that are in
16 dire need of extra resources.

17 And one of the issues that I wanted to bring
18 up, since people are bringing up things other than
19 mayoral control today, is the funding formula.

20 If a school is behind, they can never catch
21 up under this funding formula.

22 If a school has no science labs or no
23 curriculum extras, they can never catch up under
24 this funding formula.

25 The teachers, the principals, are restrained

1 in their ability to handle everything, since they're
2 handling everything, from maintenance, to
3 programming, to extracurricular programming.

4 They can never catch up.

5 And I would strongly take the look, and hope
6 that we can have more discourse about the funding
7 formula, because if every school is getting dollars
8 for a child, a school that is already a decade
9 behind can never catch up.

10 And I would hope that we address that more
11 clearly in a different venue.

12 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: May I speak to that
13 for a moment, Senator?

14 SENATOR COMRIE: Sure.

15 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: The -- I want to
16 repeat, because I think it's important, that -- to
17 the previous points from Senator Montgomery: So all
18 the renewal and community schools, that's a total of
19 130 schools, are -- as of September, will be at
20 100 percent of their fair-student funding.

21 Right now -- thank you to the support you
22 provided in the budget for education aid -- we are
23 now at 91 percent -- average, 91 percent across the
24 entire system of the fair-student-funding standard.
25 No school, at this point, is less than 87.

1 If you will help us similarly next year, we
2 will take that citywide average to 92.5 percent.
3 The floor will become 90 percent.

4 If we continue on the same pace, with your
5 help, we will have resolved the fair-student-funding
6 issues by fiscal-year '21. We will have every
7 school in the city at 100 percent.

8 So, I do deeply appreciate the point that
9 there has been an injustice done, and that it
10 doesn't change overnight.

11 I'm not, for a moment, underestimating that
12 challenge, but I do want you to know, in real time,
13 we can right that wrong, and then move the whole
14 system forward.

15 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: But, also, I want
16 to -- an example --

17 SENATOR COMRIE: You know, I wasn't
18 describing that problem to you.

19 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: No, I understand.

20 SENATOR COMRIE: I'm saying, your
21 administration is addressing it.

22 But as we move around to schools, and there
23 are schools that are having problems because they
24 don't have the facilities to keep up with other
25 schools in the system, you know, if -- my district

1 has one of the highest median incomes for any
2 district in the city -- in the state, but parents
3 are mobile, so they take their kids to the schools
4 that have the computer labs, that have the extra
5 programming.

6 I have many parents in 29 that will take
7 their kids to private school, even though the local
8 school is closer, because the schools don't have the
9 amenities that the other schools have.

10 And because of the funding formulas, these
11 schools can't catch up to provide the things that
12 private schools can have.

13 I have parents that will take their kids to
14 Elmont, and fake addresses, or, take their kids to
15 St. John's Prep or other schools, as opposed to
16 parents that are staying in the local schools.

17 And we need those parents in the local
18 schools because those are the parents who tend to be
19 more active, they would be helpful to the PTA, they
20 would be able to provide resources.

21 But because they see that the local schools
22 are not comparable for a homeowner, if you come out
23 to my -- you've been out, you've were at my
24 community this weekend, Mr. Mayor.

25 Sorry I couldn't be there, but I had a

1 commitment to another church.

2 You know, the -- my -- it's not an
3 impoverished community, as I said.

4 People are proud of their community, and they
5 want their local schools to reflect that.

6 And, right now, most of my local schools
7 don't reflect that because of the funding formulas
8 that have been in place.

9 I hope that we can do more on the state level
10 to continue this program, but I wanted to just
11 phrase that as an overall issue, because I want to
12 bring it back to the debacle that's happening at 109
13 at the end. But the Chancellor raised that can of
14 worms, so I'll bring that up later.

15 But, I wanted to focus on mayoral control,
16 and I believe there should be mayoral control.

17 And, you know, as a former school-board
18 member, as a parent with two children that went
19 through public school, you know, I understand the
20 differences, and I understand having one point of
21 our responsibility, and I think that's important.

22 My concern with mayoral control is that DOE
23 has now become an overall oligarchy, in some ways,
24 that there is not much -- there needs to be more
25 opportunity for input. There needs to be more

1 opportunity to talk about policy changes. There
2 needs to be more parental input, and especially with
3 co-location.

4 The process for co-location with parental and
5 community input is horrible.

6 The points of opportunity for parental or
7 community input is not proper, and throughout the
8 whole co-location process.

9 And I would hope that, you know, as part of
10 mayoral control, we take a hard look at the
11 transparency throughout that whole process.

12 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Well, look,
13 I appreciate that, Senator.

14 You and I have known each other a very long
15 time, and have served together in the council.

16 I want to affirm to you, we have a
17 disagreement, I think, on the evolution of the
18 co-location process.

19 I think it was horrible. I think we
20 100 percent agree. And I think it has more work to
21 be done, unquestionably.

22 And I'm not saying there aren't some examples
23 where we -- since we came in, we got it right, and
24 I'm sure we've made mistakes.

25 But I -- if you look at the whole city and

1 everything that's been moving, CECs have become
2 stronger; much more membership, much more engagement
3 with CECs.

4 PEP is an entirely different environment,
5 where there's open dialogue and debate, and some
6 things actually changed because of the open dialogue
7 and debate.

8 What we're doing at the school level, as
9 I said, on a potential co-location, we don't just
10 send anybody. We send a deputy chancellor to go and
11 meet with parents, walk through the building, and
12 look at the potential ramifications.

13 These are points in time. We have a lot more
14 to do.

15 Because -- I was a public school parent, as
16 I said, until June. It's a pretty recent experience
17 in my life.

18 The system won't work if parents are not
19 fully engaged.

20 We're very proud more parents are coming to
21 the parent-teacher conferences.

22 We're very proud of the contract, requires
23 weekly engagement with parents and the teachers.

24 But, we're at a point in a progress.

25 So I would only argue to you, our goal is to

1 deepen the amount of parent involvement and input,
2 but I can say to you, very personally, as the person
3 ultimately responsible, if you or anyone else raises
4 a concern to me, it's taken very seriously.

5 You know, the dialogue we had with
6 Senator Felder earlier, those were real issues that
7 our special-education parents are going through.

8 Real changes were made.

9 And I can go through a host of examples like
10 that.

11 And I think Senator Montgomery's point is
12 fair, that maybe you didn't see that in the previous
13 administration.

14 I do understand that. I felt the same way
15 often. But, I also have faith in democracy.

16 Democratic process led to leadership in our
17 city that heard loud and clear, that parents wanted
18 more voice in their schools, but also wanted
19 effective and efficient and clean, you know, in
20 every sense, schools.

21 So I think we're getting there on that front.

22 But I affirm to you, because it's to the
23 point the Chairman made, if any member of this
24 Committee ever says, "Here is a specific problem
25 that I feel is not being addressed," even in an

1 individual schools, we take that very seriously.
2 And I'm responsible for making sure there's that
3 follow-up.

4 SENATOR COMRIE: There's no doubt that your
5 office has been much more responsive. And as I said
6 in the beginning, the Chancellor has been very
7 responsive, and her staff.

8 I'm just still getting feedback from many
9 parents around the system, that they don't feel that
10 they have a positive impact on engaging the system,
11 and creating policy, and raising issues, and getting
12 real feedback from it.

13 And I think that that's something we can work
14 on.

15 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I also think, if I may
16 interrupt, and I apologize, I think we are not doing
17 a good enough job, at times, communicating to
18 parents, both, some of the things we're doing, and
19 some of the areas where we need their response, to
20 figure out if we're getting it right.

21 I think that's an area where we have to
22 improve.

23 But in the very tangible sense, whenever you
24 hear that feedback about something specific,
25 I welcome it, and I know the Chancellor does too,

1 because we want to improve that reality with the
2 parents.

3 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: And I think, also,
4 to some degree, it's about communication, because
5 I did do a town hall meeting, actually, in
6 District 29, about two months ago, and it was
7 standing room only.

8 But even in that audience, they asked the
9 question as to, why don't we have a prep course for
10 our students for the specialized schools?

11 And in the school that we were having the
12 town hall meeting, there is a prep course. But,
13 they have to go after school, they have to go on
14 Saturdays.

15 So a lot of the changes that we made also
16 require some parent responsibility.

17 So we can offer things, but if parents don't
18 take advantage of them, then that's not going to
19 help.

20 And the other thing that you and I have
21 discussed in the past, and we came at it from two
22 different points of view, was August Martin, and
23 there was a lot of negativity.

24 This school, going into next year, has an
25 increase in enrollment, because we did everything:

1 renewal school, new principal.

2 We had that discussion, and, actually, has
3 now become a focus that other people want to be
4 into.

5 So I think it's, you know, some things we're
6 trying that are new. Some things will work; some
7 won't always work.

8 But I think having the open dialogue and
9 being able to talk to each other, is the most
10 important thing.

11 SENATOR COMRIE: No, I've appreciated your
12 open dialogue.

13 And, again, I'm not targeting this to just
14 you.

15 You -- again, your office, has been helpful,
16 and your office has been responsive, but there's
17 still some things that can be corrected.

18 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Absolutely.

19 SENATOR COMRIE: Opportunities to ensure that
20 the parents feel that they can engage.

21 My parents have some of the longest commute
22 times in the city, or, as it is.

23 So, hearing that they have to take their
24 child on a Saturday to a program, when they would
25 prefer to do it after school, for a -- you know, the

1 engagement programs, so that they can get the
2 specialized high school tests, would probably be
3 more palatable to parents, because then they know
4 that their child is in school until 6:00, which
5 would be better for them with a long commute time
6 anyway.

7 So that's why, when you heard the groaning at
8 the meeting on about Saturdays, it's another day
9 that a parent has to, you know, take their child.

10 But just to stay on the mayoral control,
11 before I grouse about 109, the -- the MWBE vendor
12 opportunities under mayoral control, and how that is
13 done.

14 And I would hope that there would be a
15 quarterly list of the projects that were let, and
16 the opportunities that were given to MWBE, so that
17 they can come and have more people that are desiring
18 to be vendors, that feel that the system difficult
19 for them to navigate.

20 I know it's easier than it was, because
21 I looked at the website recently, but it's still a
22 problem for people to access.

23 And I would hope that there are more vendor
24 hearings or vendor -- pre-vendor opportunities so
25 that they could discuss that.

1 Just the other --

2 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Just a quick comment
3 on that?

4 So, about 1.6 billion in MWBE contracts in
5 the last year.

6 The goal is 16 billion over 10 years.

7 DOE was not part of any mayoral vision around
8 MWBE in the previous administration.

9 We now include DOE in our goals, to hold them
10 to that high standards we're holding everybody else
11 to.

12 But there's no question, again, there's a
13 communication area we must do much better.

14 We have a lot of opportunities people are not
15 hearing about, and we're trying to fix that rapidly.

16 We're trying to make the certification
17 process much easier. And Commissioner Greg Bishop
18 at Small Business Services is responsible for that,
19 I think has done a lot to improve that situation.

20 SENATOR COMRIE: He's a great commissioner,
21 by the way.

22 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: We're very proud.

23 And -- but so the point is, this is an area
24 where I want to fully say, I'm not satisfied that we
25 are yet certifying as many people as we can, and

1 making as many opportunities as clear as they can.

2 But I know the will is there, and the
3 entire -- I've met, literally, with all my
4 commissioners to tell them this is mission-critical
5 to improve the situation.

6 SENATOR COMRIE: Well, the vendors have heard
7 your desire to go to 16 billion, so you're getting
8 more people excited about it. And the easier the
9 system is accessible, and pre-vendor conferences,
10 would make that a lot better, also.

11 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Thank you.

12 SENATOR COMRIE: I just want to applaud you
13 for getting that done, and also share with you the
14 frustrations that they're having with accessing the
15 system.

16 So -- but I think it's a great program.

17 Just, you know, going back to the
18 policy-making issue, again, I think that if there
19 are opportunities on a regular basis for parents and
20 other interested parties to have public input on
21 policy and agendas, I think it would be helpful to
22 the entire system as well.

23 And I hope that we can continue to see more
24 of that.

25 Finally, I do have to, you know, bring up

1 109, because the Chancellor mentioned it to
2 Senator Golden, and co-location.

3 There's a big problem, when you have a school
4 that already has a predetermined outcome before the
5 parents can get involved.

6 And, unfortunately, as you laid out earlier,
7 the typical co-location process was not followed
8 here, because applications was sent out to the -- to
9 prospective parents to -- for their children to
10 apply, before there was a PEP vote.

11 And the PEP vote was scheduled for
12 last month, due to my intervention and
13 Council Member Garodnick.

14 You know, it still hasn't happened yet.

15 But when you have a school that has gone
16 through a principal change, which destabilizes a
17 school, which hired a principal that was a former
18 student at the school, but then has just suffered
19 because they had a problem with a student that
20 committed suicide at the school, and still
21 destabilized the school.

22 And then a larger problem, where they have
23 not had a capital upgrade, other than
24 (indiscernible) money in the building, for 18 years,
25 you know, it makes it difficult for the school to

1 get stabilized.

2 Now they're going to face a co-location, you
3 know, when you have a population there, where you're
4 going to put a high school with a junior-high
5 school, it's just not fair to the school.

6 And the process, as you laid out, was not
7 properly followed in this respect.

8 You know, I understand the need to try to
9 accommodate the surge of charters that are trying to
10 apply to become schools. But, we also have to
11 consider the needs of a community that's undergoing
12 a rebuilding process in a community that is
13 exploding in population as well, changing in their
14 socioeconomic status and their cultural status.

15 The children that are attending that school
16 tend to be undersized, because they're coming from
17 communities that their children tend to be smaller
18 in stature, and they're going to have to now worry
19 about high school children coming in there.

20 And, the whole process of a school being told
21 that they now have to put up with a charter school
22 coming into their building, when they're now being
23 promised resources for the charter school, where the
24 children in the charter school are going to be
25 treated in a different class and in a different way

1 than these schools, is going to create a "Tale of
2 Two Cities" in the school.

3 And I know that you don't necessarily believe
4 that, but I can tell you that, from the other issues
5 with charter co-location, it creates a problem. And
6 the self-esteem issue for children when they're in
7 middle school, middle school kids are crazy anyway.
8 They're going hormonal, they're going through
9 changes, they're going through a reclamation of the
10 school.

11 And now we're dealing with the fact that a
12 charter school is being dropped on them without them
13 having an opportunity to impact it.

14 And, you know, I have a problem with the
15 co-location process, because the opportunities for
16 parents to ask questions are done at the -- an
17 unofficial hearing; not the official hearing.

18 They're not -- and get answers to their
19 questions are done at the unofficial hearing.

20 The official hearing, parents can only make
21 statements. And there are -- people that are there
22 that they're not familiar with, other than the
23 superintendent, that has to listen to the questions.
24 There's no opportunity for discourse or debate.

25 And, also, when it gets to the next level,

1 there are no opportunity for parents to have
2 discourse or debate.

3 So I think that that's a major problem with
4 the co-location process, and I think that that's
5 something that needs to be adjusted under mayoral
6 control as well.

7 But I would appeal to you that the situation
8 at 109 is not fair to the self-esteem of those
9 students, it's not fair to the rehabilitation of the
10 school.

11 It's the school that, given the opportunity,
12 could be a shining-star middle school, with a
13 high -- high-performing students and services, if it
14 were given.

15 But it hasn't been given that opportunity.

16 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Well, as you know,
17 we forestalled the vote. We've been talking to the
18 CEC members. We have been meeting with all the
19 constituents, including the superintendent. And,
20 the vote will be taking place this month.

21 That doesn't -- you know, we don't know the
22 outcome. That's what a vote is all about.

23 But most importantly, we have highlighted
24 that school. It's an arts-focused school.

25 I understand that it's going to continue to be an

1 arts-focused school.

2 But, I do want to say that, at no point did
3 the parents think that that -- that the students who
4 might apply to the charter, were not told they were
5 specifically going to be in any one place.

6 And, to say that the new-visions charters,
7 because this is a new-vision school, has, in
8 general, been very good partners, and have brought
9 things to the table in a co-location. Something
10 that has to be said.

11 But at this point it's still being discussed.
12 It is being discussed with the communities, and we
13 should have a decision at the PEP meeting.

14 And, again, hopefully, there will be
15 something that will work well for everyone.

16 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I just want to --
17 first all of all, I appreciate you raising it,
18 because we want to look at every single situation
19 and see if we're doing it right.

20 And, again, I know you a long time and I know
21 you're speaking from the heart.

22 But I want to affirm to you that, when we
23 engage parents -- and, first of all, parents are not
24 a monolith. I can say, from going back to my PTA
25 meetings and school-board meetings, parents have

1 different views.

2 But we make a very concerted effort to engage
3 parents and hear what their concerns are, and we
4 also try and bring to bear what we think is the best
5 educational approach and trying to mix all the
6 needs.

7 But, CEC is a part of it, PEP is a part of
8 it, there's a lot of different milestones along the
9 way.

10 So, we're certainly going to take your
11 concerns and go back and discuss them, and see how
12 we can be responsive.

13 But I do think, and I've monitored this
14 pretty closely, in two years' time, we now have a
15 process, in a typical situation -- maybe not every
16 situation is equal or perfect -- but a typical
17 situation, where there is earlier engagement with
18 parents about potential changes, there is
19 higher-level engagement; meaning, literally, to the
20 point of a deputy chancellor participating with the
21 parents. There is much more engagement from CECs.
22 There's a much more open debate at the PEP.

23 I'm not gonna, you know, debate, chapter and
24 verse, each of the specific points you raised.

25 I'm gonna say that I think this is a very

1 different reality, and it's in process; meaning, we
2 expect to go deeper.

3 So I guess I want to defend the fact that a
4 lot of people have worked hard to turn this
5 supertanker and move it towards more meaningful
6 parent engagement.

7 That doesn't mean parents always agree with
8 each other. It doesn't mean we always agree with
9 the parents. And we, ultimately, have to make the
10 decision we think is best for the children.

11 But, we will go back and make sure that if
12 there's other issues to address here, that we
13 address them.

14 SENATOR COMRIE: Well, there are issues.

15 And, again, as I said in the beginning, this
16 particular case did not follow your optimum process.

17 And, you know, when -- when parents see
18 applications for a charter school in the school that
19 they were in, because that's how it was presented,
20 it just destabilizes the school.

21 And regardless of what -- you know,
22 regardless of anything else, that school is in a
23 need for stabilization. And it could be an
24 excellent junior high school, because the community
25 needs it.

1 There's the other two junior high schools
2 near it, are over 130 percent overcrowded. There's
3 no need for that to even happen.

4 And I think that we need to take a good, hard
5 look at it.

6 I've spoken to the Chancellor and the Deputy
7 Chancellor. We've been arguing vehemently about it.

8 And I hope that we can continue to argue
9 about it before the PEP meeting.

10 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Thank you.

11 SENATOR COMRIE: Thank you.

12 And, again, I support mayor control; I think
13 it should happen.

14 I think it should happen within the term, and
15 six months after the term, of the mayor, just in
16 case we get a mayor that's not as amenable and
17 someone that I would want to see reelected, as of
18 yourself.

19 I'll just put that in at the end.

20 I don't know if that's proper, but I did it
21 anyway.

22 Thank you.

23 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

24 Senator Perkins.

25 SENATOR PERKINS: Thank you.

1 It's good to see you.

2 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Senator, just one
3 second.

4 Just to your inform you --

5 SENATOR PERKINS: Take your time.

6 SENATOR MARCELLINO: No, I'm not gonna -- I'm
7 going to be a little quick.

8 -- we have two more questioners, so I'm just
9 holding off on a potty-break.

10 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I accept.

11 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

12 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I will stay strong,
13 Senator.

14 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Well, no, if you --
15 never mind.

16 Senator Perkins.

17 I'm sorry, Bill. Go ahead.

18 SENATOR PERKINS: There's a break that
19 somebody needs to take?

20 SENATOR MARCELLINO: No. No, no, no.
21 Go ahead.

22 SENATOR PERKINS: So, good to see you, and
23 thank you for your time you're sharing with us.

24 Mayoral control was perceived as mayoral
25 dictatorship when it was proposed, because of some

1 of what you're talking about today, which is that
2 the mayor could come in and just decide to implement
3 whatever programs and policies within those schools,
4 that, in the past, might have had to go through some
5 other networks of community-based school boards and
6 representatives.

7 So there was a little bit of a
8 (indiscernible) at that time to create some
9 democracy, and there was an outcry on the part of
10 the community because they were alienated from the
11 schools, they were alienated from the system.

12 And, so, that's how we got to that point.

13 So, now, clearly, obviously, you're not a
14 dictator, and from -- from that perspective, but,
15 for instance, the charters are still in play in a
16 way that appears to be as if they're given some sort
17 of preferential treatment.

18 And so, I don't know if, in fact, that's the
19 case, but -- but what is the status of the charter
20 movement now these days?

21 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Well, I don't think
22 there's any preferential treatment, and I think
23 there's equal treatment, which, to me, means this:

24 I have described the charter movement as a
25 multifaceted movement.

1 There are very small grassroots charters.

2 There are big charter networks.

3 There are charter schools that go out of
4 their way to serve English-language learners and
5 kids with special needs.

6 There are charters that, bluntly, go out of
7 their way to avoid serving some of those kids.

8 There are charters that, once they accept a
9 child, keep them all the way through regardless of
10 how well the child's doing.

11 There are other charters that I think wrongly
12 try and remove children who don't test well.

13 So, it is a diverse movement.

14 But what we've said from the beginning is, we
15 will work with charter schools, we will work with
16 religious schools, we will work with the whole
17 spectrum, to educate our children in our city, but
18 what we will do is hold some standards.

19 Now, I want to use the example of pre-K,
20 where we worked with Catholic schools, Jewish
21 schools, Muslim schools, charter schools, all in
22 common cause, and we're able to do great things
23 across the board.

24 That's what I'd like to see happen
25 consistently, what the Chancellor has done, which is

1 going and working with charter schools that want to
2 work with district schools, sharing both best
3 practices, both ways. We will do that.

4 But on questions of space, for example, we
5 have clear standards.

6 There are situations, you'll remember in
7 2014, where requests were made of us that we don't
8 think are educationally-sound sometimes. We will
9 not agree to something that we don't think is
10 educationally-sound. We won't agree to something we
11 don't think the space is sufficient in terms of the
12 preexisting school.

13 Where we can accommodate a charter school,
14 and we think it's appropriate, we of course will.

15 So I think it's, we call them as we see them,
16 and it's a system based on fairness.

17 But, I think charter schools, like every
18 other part of the educational lineup, have a role to
19 play, but we're going to hold them to clear
20 standards.

21 SENATOR PERKINS: So how much money is
22 there -- is in the budget for charters?

23 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Okay. This -- this is
24 for the upcoming budget?

25 Yeah. 1.7 billion for -- for next fiscal, it

1 is 1.7 billion.

2 SENATOR PERKINS: And do you have the -- some
3 idea of enrollment?

4 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: The enrollment right
5 now, I'm going to test this and see --

6 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: They're about
7 10 percent of the --

8 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: It's on the road to
9 10 -- is it on the road to 10 --

10 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: -- no the road --
11 no, it's about 8-point-something.

12 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Yeah.

13 So, 104,000 kids out of, right now, we're
14 over 1.1 million.

15 So, closing in on 10 percent, not quite there
16 yet.

17 SENATOR PERKINS: The concern about the --

18 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: And could I interrupt,
19 please, Senator?

20 Just one other fact that I've been handily
21 handed, which is, again, this is spending required
22 by state law, so we're fulfilling our requirements
23 under state law.

24 SENATOR PERKINS: So did you -- so -- again,
25 did you indicate how much money is in the -- did you

1 say 1.7 billion --

2 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: 1.7 billion for
3 104,00 kids.

4 SENATOR PERKINS: And how many schools is
5 that?

6 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Individual school
7 units? That is a good question.

8 We will -- people will be working on that as
9 we speak -- unless they actually have it that
10 quickly.

11 SENATOR PERKINS: Ooh, very good, very good.

12 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Karen, you should
13 become mayor, I just think you're that good.

14 205 individual schools.

15 SENATOR PERKINS: Okay.

16 So, now, in your -- in your remarks, you
17 indicate that the new work with the charter, in
18 terms of some of what they do that you can apply to
19 regular public schools.

20 Apparently, that's why, in addition to all
21 our efforts to lift up our public school children,
22 we have partnered with dozens of charters.

23 But what are you -- in that partnership, what
24 did you come up with?

25 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Well, I -- so, a

1 couple of points.

2 I know the Chancellor has a lot to say on
3 this too.

4 Look, we said -- we obviously have a
5 difference from the previous administration on this
6 topic.

7 We said, we want a real partnership --

8 SENATOR PERKINS: The "previous
9 administration" being the Bloomberg Administration?

10 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Correct.

11 We said, we want a relationship in which it's
12 acknowledged that sometimes a district school is the
13 place where the innovation occurs, and sometimes the
14 charter school is the place that needs to learn from
15 a district school, and vice versa.

16 We said that there had to be clear and
17 consistent standards about admissions and retention
18 of kids, and especially focusing on English-language
19 learners and special-ed kids and kids who don't test
20 so well.

21 So we've applied a set of standards that did
22 not exist before, as you well know.

23 But at the same time, we said, you know,
24 look, if you're acknowledging these standards that
25 we hold for our own district schools, to me this is

1 a fairness and consistency matter.

2 We would never say a district school, a
3 traditional public school, could reject a child
4 because they don't test well; could reject a child
5 because they have a special-education reality, or
6 because they're English-language learners.

7 So we're saying, one standard for everyone.

8 If you meet that standard, if you want to be
9 collegial with us and share practices both ways,
10 we're absolutely ready to engage as partners and be
11 supportive.

12 Now, many charter schools have been willing
13 to do that. Some have not been willing to do that.

14 But pre-K is a great example.

15 We said, here's the -- here's the standard we
16 need to meet for pre-K: the safety standards, the
17 curricular standards. Are you willing to commit to
18 that?

19 If you're willing to commit to that, let's do
20 this together; the same as I said with the religious
21 schools.

22 All but one charter institution was willing
23 to agree to those rules, and has abided by them, and
24 has helped us to expand pre-K the way we did.

25 SENATOR PERKINS: Which is that one, by the

1 way?

2 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Well, that happens to
3 be Success Academy, Senator.

4 SENATOR PERKINS: Is that Eva Moskowitz's?

5 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: That would be,
6 Senator.

7 Chancellor, would you like to add?

8 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Well, I think one
9 of the things that the original charter law was
10 meant to do, is to let charter schools innovate in
11 ways that we could learn from.

12 What could they do differently than us, and
13 how do we adopt that?

14 So one of the charter networks that we're
15 working closely with is uncommon schools, because
16 what we found, is that the training that many of
17 their principals and teachers go through, on
18 feedback, was done particularly well.

19 So, we have partnered District 19 and
20 District 23, by the superintendent's request -- and
21 now I think 18 wants to be part of it -- how to give
22 teacher feedback.

23 So we actually combined their -- some of
24 their teachers and their principals with our
25 teachers and our principals to learn how to do that

1 better.

2 And that's one example of their doing
3 something that we thought we could learn from.

4 The other thing is, we invited, particularly
5 stand-alone charters -- because, you know, there are
6 network charters and there are independent
7 charters -- to attend our principals' conferences.

8 After I visit certain charter schools,
9 they'll say, you know we're very lonely.

10 I was one -- one on the peninsula, it's the
11 only one of its kind.

12 So I suggested to that superintendent that
13 she invite that principal to attend the monthly
14 principals' conferences.

15 And -- because these are the kids that are
16 going to play with each other in the playground.
17 They're going to be in other places together.

18 So, we're trying to see where that makes more
19 sense.

20 We've also opened a lot of our professional
21 development for -- when we have the space available,
22 for principals or teachers to come to it, from
23 whether it's parochial or charter schools.

24 So our hope is to make it more unified.

25 We, also, although they're both charter and

1 non-charter, some of the schools are using some
2 interesting ways.

3 One of the charter schools I went to was
4 doing some interesting work with gender-specific
5 classes: girls-only and boys-only.

6 So by looking and seeing what they're doing,
7 and their results, we said, okay, maybe that might
8 be worth something that we might do.

9 It's the same way that we gave birth to the
10 idea of PROS, that the UFT has worked with us on,
11 that, why not create our own little charter world,
12 to some degree, within our world, where schools
13 could see what they want to do differently, and how
14 we'd support them.

15 So I think it's a two-way street.

16 I think, in many cases, what we do
17 particularly well in our renewal schools, but is
18 also in other schools, intervention services.

19 So they've come to a lot of intervention
20 workshops; how to use the AIS services.

21 I think it's a two-way street when everybody
22 comes to the table, with one goal in mind: what's
23 best for kids?

24 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Let me just, one
25 clarification on the PROS schools, because I think

1 this is so important.

2 You know, this is something we came to
3 agreement with the union on: that a school
4 could vote -- the administrators and the teachers
5 could vote -- to suspend union work rules, and to
6 suspend DOE work rules, and create what they
7 thought was the most effective environment, which
8 includes changing the schedule, elongating
9 the school day, you know, having activities and
10 tutoring on weekends...whatever it might be.

11 That was district schools, traditional public
12 schools, staking their claim to the ability to
13 innovate and change in the modern dynamic and reach
14 kids in the best way possible.

15 I think there has been a stereotype, that
16 the only sources of innovation were charter schools.

17 And, we want to assert -- there are certainly
18 some charter schools who have been innovative and we
19 want to learn from them, but we also want to assert
20 that a district school can be a source of
21 innovation.

22 And that under the PROS program, which is now
23 well over 100 schools, that we are taking
24 traditional public schools and giving them an
25 opportunity to go places they never went before, and

1 to become as modern and effective and innovative as
2 possible.

3 So, when the Chancellor alluded to them,
4 I wanted you to hear that, again, in the vein of a
5 single standard, we're not saying to our district
6 schools -- which are where the vast majority of our
7 kids are being educated, and will be for the, you
8 know, decades and decades and decades into the
9 future -- we're not saying just stay where you are;
10 we're saying, we want to see you do better, we want
11 to see you innovate. We're trying to give you the
12 freedom to do the kind of innovation you want to do.

13 SENATOR PERKINS: So your -- I guess, from
14 your point of view, the charter schools, for the
15 most part, have been successful as models for
16 what --

17 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Well, let me give you
18 some facts.

19 First of all, again --

20 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Excuse me.

21 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: -- I affirm strongly
22 I want --

23 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Excuse me.

24 Before we go off to long on charter schools,
25 this is not a hearing on charter schools.

1 This is a hearing mayoral control.

2 SENATOR PERKINS: Right, but --

3 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Can we --

4 SENATOR PERKINS: -- mayoral control, if
5 I may interrupt, is a Bloomberg invention, and the
6 first thing you did with it was create charter
7 schools in my district.

8 So, I'm familiar with the whole --

9 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Then go argue with
10 Mayor Bloomberg.

11 But this is, Mayor de Blasio, and we're
12 talking about mayoral control.

13 SENATOR PERKINS: I know, that's why I'm
14 asking, because he's the Mayor, and --

15 SENATOR MARCELLINO: All I'm suggesting is,
16 we've got a long day ahead of us, there's a lot of
17 speakers waiting to come up, and there's two more of
18 your colleagues that are waiting to be heard too.

19 Can we focus on mayoral control of the
20 New York City Schools?

21 SENATOR PERKINS: That's why I was asking
22 him, what have we learned from the charter schools
23 under --

24 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: So what I say,
25 I want to pull it to both of your points, and,

1 Mr. Chairman, I believe mayoral control has allowed
2 us to create a dynamic that is fair and consistent,
3 because we've said that all of these schools, you
4 know, we have oversight responsibility for religious
5 schools. And, again, we have found them to be
6 partners in pre-K, partners in after-school
7 programs.

8 We're trying to create a high standard across
9 all of education in the city, because every single
10 child, it doesn't matter what school they graduate
11 from, they're going to be part of the fabric of life
12 in the city.

13 What we've said with charters, which is
14 different from the previous administration, so, our
15 version of mayoral control, based on the votes of
16 the people in the election, is we're going to hold
17 you to a standard.

18 If you meet that standard, we're very happy
19 to work with you.

20 If you don't meet that standard, there's
21 going to be times when we can't work together.

22 But, to the fact about performance, it is a
23 very diverse movement. We've seen some charters
24 that performed very well while being inclusive.
25 We're seeing some charters that have performed well

1 while not being inclusive, which we don't accept.

2 SENATOR PERKINS: Can I ask you a question on
3 that?

4 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Please.

5 SENATOR PERKINS: What is "inclusive" and
6 "not inclusive" in this --

7 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Meaning, if you -- I'm
8 going to use the easiest example.

9 If you reflect the district, you're in, in
10 terms of special-ed kids, in terms of
11 English-language learners, in terms of retention of
12 any child that you accept into the program.

13 So, there are some charters that do all those
14 things, just like we would as a district school,
15 and, manage to get good results.

16 There are some that do those things, don't
17 get good results.

18 There are some that are exclusive and get
19 good results, and we don't find that acceptable.

20 There are some that are exclusive that don't
21 get good results.

22 It's a diverse movement.

23 But what can I tell you, overall, for the
24 city of New York, here is an interesting fact that
25 does not get enough attention:

1 The last standardized test -- you know
2 I believe in multiple measures. I'm not trying to
3 say standardized tests are the only way to look at
4 things, but they are one measure.

5 District schools outperform charters in
6 New York City in the last testing from last year, in
7 terms of ELA. And charter schools outperform
8 district schools in terms of math.

9 So, it was a split-decision.

10 But what we do know is, different even within
11 that, is the difference was, the district schools
12 always have to accept all comers. They could not
13 turn away.

14 We would never -- ideologically,
15 philosophically, morally -- never turn away a
16 special-ed kid, we would never turn away a kid who
17 didn't take a test well.

18 Sadly, some charters did.

19 So it's not a perfect scale.

20 But even by that imperfect scale, you don't
21 see, you know, the kind of slanted outcome, I think,
22 most people would assume from what they read in the
23 papers.

24 SENATOR PERKINS: So why are charters allowed
25 to careen?

1 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Well, again, what
2 I would say --

3 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Oh, come on!

4 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: -- and I'll be very
5 quick on this --

6 SENATOR PERKINS: No, he just said that they
7 don't accept the same -- all the same -- all the
8 students --

9 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: -- I think that that's
10 a very serious area of concern --

11 SENATOR PERKINS: But --

12 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: -- no, look, I'll just
13 answer it quickly.

14 SENATOR PERKINS: -- yeah, why are you
15 answering it for him?

16 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: -- I think it's a
17 serious area of concern, Senator.

18 I know there have been discussions about
19 state legislation that would address that matter.

20 I think that's a very worthy pursuit.

21 Within the state law, we address it in all
22 the ways we can, and that's what I've talked about
23 in terms of the standards we've set, where we say
24 no, in certain situations, where we feel that
25 there's not been inclusivity.

1 But the better solution, the more universal
2 solution, would be to act on this via state law.

3 SENATOR PERKINS: Do you recommend charter
4 schools?

5 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I'm sorry, I don't
6 understand the question.

7 SENATOR PERKINS: I'm trying to understand,
8 is it your position that charter schools are the
9 right way to go in terms of public education?

10 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I would say it
11 differently, and, honestly, Senator, I -- my job is
12 to make sure, of course, that all kids are served.

13 That is our responsibility.

14 But the core of New York City education is
15 traditional public schools, and will be for as long
16 as I'm alive.

17 And, I have a very personal experience with
18 traditional public schools, and that's where most of
19 my constituents send their kids, and I have to get
20 that system to work better; but at the same time,
21 I'm going to work with the other types of schools.

22 So it's not recommend or don't recommend.

23 I care about everyone.

24 I care about every child.

25 I know the Chancellor cares deeply about

1 every child.

2 But the first thing we have to fix and
3 improve is where the vast majority of kids are,
4 which is our traditional public schools.

5 SENATOR PERKINS: If I may, just -- just one
6 last question?

7 So, now, do you keep the demographic data on
8 the charter schools' population?

9 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I want to carefully
10 answer in the sense that, yes, to some extent.

11 I don't know how perfect it is, but we can
12 give you what we have.

13 SENATOR PERKINS: Thank you.

14 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Thank you, Senator.

15 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Senator Sanders.

16 SENATOR SANDERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

17 I'm sure that this has been a long hearing
18 for you, and it's just beginning, so I will respect
19 your position and I will not ask this board about --
20 or, this body, rather, about diplomas and
21 certificates for special-ed kids; bullying; the
22 testing.

23 I will focus on the mission ahead, what we
24 set out to do.

25 Let me first say that I am a former

1 school-board president in District 27, where we
2 raised the academic achievement every year that
3 I was there.

4 So I have a different view on school boards,
5 and whether there should be, or whether we should
6 have mayoral control.

7 I feel that the problems of democracy are
8 best served by more democracy, and not less.

9 So I am aghast that New York City is the only
10 city in the state that does not have a school board.

11 But I, too, would have to go on the record
12 and say that I think that a one-year extension is
13 unsatisfactory; that whether you agree with the
14 system or not, the basic justice of a one-year,
15 there's not much you can do in that, except to
16 prepare to come back for the next year to plead for
17 more time.

18 So that's an inappropriate amount of time,
19 and we can argue seven years, but we certainly
20 should not submit the Mayor to, or, the city, for
21 that matter, to a one-year extension.

22 We should add a real extension, where they
23 would have a chance to test their philosophy, and we
24 have a chance to grade them.

25 One year does not do justice to anyone.

1 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Thank you, Senator.

2 SENATOR SANDERS: Well, I appreciate that.

3 Perhaps it's because you prayed for me on
4 Sunday.

5 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I did.

6 SENATOR SANDERS: But that's -- well, I don't
7 know if the prayers are being answered or the angels
8 are speaking, but whatever it is, I will say that
9 I am watching how New York City is treated.

10 I want it to be treated fairly.

11 If the previous mayor had seven or eight
12 years, then that should be a standard; or, we should
13 come up with a real standard and say, Here is what
14 it will be from now on for every mayor. Regardless
15 whether we like a future mayor or not, this would be
16 the standard.

17 I'm concerned about mayoral control, because
18 I'm hearing a lot from parents who feel that their
19 voices are not getting through, that they're not
20 hear -- that no one is really hearing from them.
21 That they -- they are allowed to speak, but nothing
22 changes.

23 I do believe that, Bill Clinton seems to
24 come to mind right around now, where he spoke of
25 "Mend it, don't end it."

1 And if I had -- were here years ago, I would
2 have said that about the school board.

3 However, I'm here now about mayoral control,
4 and under those conditions: Mend it, don't end it.

5 I'm working on, along with many of my
6 colleagues, some very interesting ideas that may
7 allow more parent participation.

8 And I -- our Ranker on this one is --
9 absolutely has all of this information, and I would
10 encourage you to reach out to him, to see some of
11 our ideas of bringing more parent participation in
12 the mayoral-control arena.

13 You still have mayoral control, but there
14 would be another avenue for parents to participate.

15 And since the day is long, and I don't mind
16 you answering those other points that I raised,
17 I will stop there, and respect the Chair.

18 Mr. Chair, on another day I want some more
19 time.

20 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Just one quick answer,
21 Senator. Thank you.

22 And I do want you to know, again, we don't
23 consider the mission done on parental involvement.
24 We consider the mission begun.

25 You can see in the CEC participation, you can

1 see in the parent-teacher-conference participation,
2 there's real metrics that show there is something
3 starting to move, and, including in the co-location
4 process, something is starting to move.

5 Much more to be done.

6 And what we ask of you is partnership.

7 When you identify someplace where we are not
8 doing well enough in hearing parent voices, we want
9 to do better.

10 I will also say, again, parents can disagree;
11 there can be different sides among parents. And
12 sometimes we can hear people -- fully hear them, and
13 say, we come to a different conclusion with an
14 absolute open heart.

15 But if you think there are areas we're
16 falling down, in terms of engaging parents early and
17 often to hear their concerns, we want to hear them
18 identified so we can go right at them.

19 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: And I just want to
20 add that, I know District 27 very well. I've been
21 out on the peninsula several times.

22 The Title I parent engagement in District 27
23 is particularly high. Queen McKeever (ph.), making
24 sure that some of that happens.

25 But most importantly, I think one of the

1 things that mayoral control also brings is that,
2 when I go visit, and, particularly, I say on the
3 peninsula, and I mean that there are other city
4 agencies that should be involved, because there's a
5 particular need out on the peninsula. A lot more
6 homeless kids that come to the peninsula, and then
7 get sent back to The Bronx, or wherever.

8 I'm able to go back to my office and call
9 heads of other agencies and I say, How do we work on
10 this together?

11 And that's something that I think, if you're
12 not dealing with it, from chancellor to, let's's
13 say, Homeless Services or Temporary Housing, you
14 don't have that communication.

15 So having the ability to do that at that
16 level I think is very important, particularly in
17 high-need areas.

18 I just met with your superintendent,
19 Mary Barton. There are certain things I know that
20 area needs that may not be relevant to other areas,
21 but, I can then leverage that support.

22 We're talking, particularly, working with the
23 new Y out there, because there's a special service
24 that you need. You're -- the drug issue is coming
25 up high.

1 I think mayoral control allows you to work
2 with intercity agencies in ways that you can't do if
3 you're a stand-alone school board, or you don't know
4 who all the other players are.

5 SENATOR SANDERS: Thank you.

6 Thank you very much.

7 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

8 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you, Senator.

9 Senator Murphy.

10 SENATOR MURPHY: Well, thank you, Chairman.

11 Mayor, Chancellor, very nice to meet you
12 today.

13 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Thank you, Senator.

14 SENATOR MURPHY: I'm Senator Murphy from the
15 47th District. I represent Westchester County
16 and Dutchess County and, of course, you know,
17 Putnam County.

18 In Putnam County and Westchester, which
19 I represent, the -- our school system faces a
20 formula which puts us at a regional cost index
21 beneath New York City, even though the federal
22 Bureau of Education Labor Statistics put us at a par
23 with New York City's cost of living.

24 Many people say this is -- unfairly
25 short-changes our schools because of New York City's

1 expense.

2 Include -- but we have Peekskill School
3 District which is really getting hurt.

4 How -- not necessarily to you, Mr. Mayor, but
5 maybe the Chancellor could add: How do we fix this?

6 Because sometimes Westchester and Putnam gets
7 put in, and sometimes Westchester and Putnam get
8 thrown out.

9 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Well, I'd like to --

10 SENATOR MURPHY: So it's a major concern
11 for me, and my district, and the people that
12 I represent.

13 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: -- I'd like to start,
14 because I do think it's a question that has to do
15 with the public process, the political process.

16 Look, I believe that many school districts in
17 the state did not get the support they deserve.

18 And I believe that's what the campaign for
19 fiscal equity, a case almost a decade ago, proved,
20 decided by the Court of Appeals, our highest court,
21 and it was to benefit jurisdictions all over the
22 state; in the North Country, in some of the big
23 cities upstate, as well as New York City.

24 So, I think there's a bigger approach that
25 has to be taken here to make sure that any district

1 in need is getting more support.

2 And I can't think of a better investment for
3 the state of New York.

4 I don't -- I honestly do not believe,
5 Senator, it is, you know, an us-versus-them
6 situation.

7 I believe this whole state rises and falls
8 together.

9 I believe everyone in this state has an
10 interest in New York City having a good educational
11 system and a strong economy and a strong workforce,
12 that's having a great benefit for the whole state.

13 But I want to see cities and towns and
14 counties all over the state do well with their
15 education too.

16 If we're going to have a thriving statewide
17 economy, we need that.

18 So I would argue that, in fact, education
19 support across the state is one of the worthiest
20 investments.

21 If you follow the pattern of CFE, is one
22 example.

23 It would mean greater investment in a number
24 of areas of the state.

25 SENATOR MURPHY: I -- I absolutely get that,

1 and it's a big concern in my district, and because
2 you have, like I said, Peekskill, and then you have
3 a community like Bedford that has Mount Kisco that
4 comes into.

5 So it's that they're \$8.8 million short; and,
6 yet, it's a -- quote/unquote, above average.

7 But, one quick question.

8 And then I know, thank you for your diligence
9 in being here for the number of hours.

10 -- but, Mr. Mayor, this is to you.

11 Convince me.

12 Convince me why I should vote for mayoral
13 control.

14 With all the allegations that are going on in
15 your office and your administration, why I should
16 vote for mayoral control; and why I can trust you to
17 make sure that we give the 1.1 million kids in
18 New York City the opportunity to succeed, and make
19 sure that the \$9 billion gets spread out evenly.

20 Let me know.

21 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Senator, thank you.

22 Senator, first of all, I would point to
23 facts.

24 Graduation rate over 70 percent for the first
25 time in New York City.

1 68,000 kids in pre-K full day --

2 And thank you to all the members of the
3 Legislature for support for that.

4 -- versus 20,000 a few years ago when I came
5 into office.

6 The fact that we are devoting ourselves to a
7 plan to get all kids on a grade-level reading at
8 third-grade level by the next 10 years.

9 I mean, these are major changes in the way we
10 approach education. They're only possible under a
11 mayoral-control system.

12 I mentioned our Computer Science For All
13 initiative, which is generating such excitement at
14 the grassroots, but also in the private sector of
15 our city, because it means we'll have a more
16 educated workforce for the future.

17 That never could have been achieved without a
18 mayoral-control system.

19 So I would say, look at what's been achieved
20 already: Higher graduation rate. Higher test
21 scores. Pre-K. After-school for all our middle
22 school kids. And, also, I have reforms in terms of
23 things like computer science that did not exist
24 before.

25 Those prove real achievement, and that alone

1 would be a reason, I think, to support a renewal of
2 mayoral control.

3 But I would argue, also, that, obviously
4 I know you are held to the same standard in public
5 life.

6 We're going to hear all sorts of allegations
7 over the years; all of us.

8 And in a democracy, we don't judge by
9 allegations. We judge by facts and through due
10 process.

11 What we know has happened in our schools, we
12 know for a fact it's proven, it's objective.

13 We know there's support for mayoral control
14 across the ideological spectrum.

15 We know our business community in New York
16 City, people -- including people who don't always
17 agree with me on a number of issues, are amongst the
18 strongest supporters of mayoral control.

19 And, we know that voices, as disparate as
20 Mayor Bloomberg and Mayor Giuliani and I, share a
21 view that this is the only governing system that
22 works, and we, literally, don't know of any
23 alternative that would work without what we saw in
24 the past, which was inefficiency, inability to
25 reform, and, bluntly, a lot of corruption.

1 So, I'm going to argue to you, that between
2 track record and vision, and the fact that there is
3 no better system, and this one really has bipartisan
4 support, that this is the way to go.

5 SENATOR MURPHY: There's one thing you
6 forgot, and that's the trust factor, and that's for
7 the public; for all of the public to trust us public
8 officials to do the right thing.

9 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Uh-huh.

10 SENATOR MURPHY: And so that's very, very
11 important, and that should be at the high top --

12 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Well, and the
13 public -- I agree with you, and I would express it
14 this way, and I'm a former public school parent, as
15 I mentioned:

16 The public trusts actual results that change
17 their lives.

18 You can talk to those parents of the
19 68,500 kids in pre-K, fully, almost 50,000 more kids
20 in pre-K than just a few years ago.

21 What does it mean for their lives they got
22 that?

23 What does it mean for folks who have a kid in
24 after-school who they couldn't get a seat before?

25 This is what we are charged with doing:

1 Honorably and consistently providing real good
2 results and real change for our constituents.

3 That's how we should be judged.

4 SENATOR MURPHY: I will agree with you on
5 that.

6 I have a 13-year-old, 12-year-old, and
7 5 years.

8 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: God bless you.

9 SENATOR MURPHY: I'm in the middle out there.

10 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: That's a
11 (indiscernible) in life, may I say, as your fellow
12 parent.

13 SENATOR MURPHY: We are busy, as you know.

14 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: I wish you
15 perseverance.

16 SENATOR MURPHY: Well, you know, sometimes
17 it's -- I got a good egg at home that takes care of
18 the kids while I'm up here.

19 But, you know, it's one of those things that,
20 it is our obligation to make sure all these kids are
21 educated. I get that.

22 But it's also the trust factor that also
23 needs to be put out there too.

24 With that being said:

25 I thank you for your diligence.

1 I thank you for your time here in answering
2 the questions.

3 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Thank you.

4 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

5 I appreciate that.

6 I just have to make one point vis-a-vis the
7 discussion we had with Senator Perkins, relative to
8 charter schools, and the like.

9 The way this -- this hearing was designed to
10 talk about mayoral control; not charter schools
11 versus public schools.

12 The claims, Chancellor, are you aware of any
13 action taken against charter schools for denying
14 admission -- improperly denying admission of
15 students?

16 Because it's been, the charter schools always
17 claim, and what I've observed, their admission is
18 through a lottery.

19 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Yes, I think what
20 has been in the papers has been parents who,
21 individually, found certain actions in certain
22 schools objectionable.

23 So there are parents who are actually
24 bringing lawsuits against specific charters for
25 inappropriate actions.

1 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Usually because their
2 kid didn't get in.

3 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: No, because their
4 kid is getting thrown out.

5 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Yeah, if I may jump in
6 for a quick second, Mr. Chair?

7 Look, I'll state the obvious:

8 We are obligated by state law to provide a
9 certain amount of funding for charters, and, you
10 know, live by a whole series of ground rules upon
11 how we comport -- through which we comport ourselves
12 with charters. And we'll continue to do that.

13 But I refer to some standards that we hold
14 and we believe in, that whenever a decision is ours
15 to make under state law, we do pay attention to
16 these other factors, because we want to see -- for
17 example, we know for a fact that there are instances
18 where children were not allowed to continue in a
19 certain charter school.

20 We want charter schools to live by the same
21 standards as district schools.

22 If a child is accepted, work with that child
23 the whole way through, just like we would have to.

24 You were a teacher. You obviously knew that
25 if a kid came into your school, short of a major

1 disciplinary issue, which is a separate matter, but,
2 if a kid was tough to teach, I know you buckled down
3 and tried to find a way.

4 Well, I think, generalizing it, that's what
5 every district school has to do.

6 We don't have an option of saying, wow,
7 you're tougher to teach so we're not going to keep
8 you.

9 So where we get to make our own decisions,
10 that is an important issue for us.

11 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

12 Appreciate your time, Mayor.

13 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

14 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Chancellor, we
15 appreciate your time.

16 CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA: Thank you.

17 SENATOR MARCELLINO: And as we say in the old
18 country, "May the 4th go with you."

19 MAYOR BILL de BLASIO: Well done, Chairman.

20 Thank you.

21 SENATOR MARCELLINO: God bless you.

22 We're going to take a two-minute break.

23 And the next group of people can up:

24 Joe Herrera, Derrell Bradford, and Ian Rowe.

25 (A recess was taken.)

1 (The hearing resumes.)

2 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Gentlemen, if you have
3 written statements, I believe they've been submitted
4 for the record; they'll be put in.

5 If you could just -- if you wish to make a
6 statement individually, summarize what you have to
7 say, so we can get to any questions that might be
8 asked, and then we can move on.

9 Okay?

10 IAN ROWE: Sure, Senator.

11 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Start with whomever you
12 wish.

13 JOE HERRERA: (Microphone turned off.)

14 Well, good afternoon.

15 My name is Joe Herrera. I am an organizer
16 and advocate from Coney Island, Brooklyn.

17 I have been a member of Families for
18 Excellent Schools since 2013.

19 I would like to start by thanking the members
20 of the Senate Education Committee for inviting me to
21 share testimony today.

22 Hearings, like this one, where parents,
23 community members, educators, and students have the
24 opportunity to provide input about the governance of
25 our school system are a welcomed opportunity to make

1 our voices heard.

2 The question of whether the Mayor should
3 retain control of our school system is not one to be
4 taken lightly.

5 (Microphone turned on.)

6 As a parent, I do believe that mayoral
7 control is a policy that is a good thing for
8 New York City's children.

9 It allows the mayor to directly manage the
10 city's schools instead of turning over management to
11 a politically-motivated school board.

12 Mayoral control brings with it a single
13 vision, and when properly administered, it has the
14 potential to allow major initiatives to roll out and
15 be managed effectively, creating a better school
16 system for all New York City's children.

17 However, as a father whose children attend
18 public charter schools, I have been deeply
19 disappointed by the approach of the current
20 administration has taken when it comes to our public
21 schools.

22 It is an unfortunate example of politics
23 trumping policy, and a reminder why periodic
24 reviews, such as this hearing, are so important.

25 The current administration has made no secret

1 of their philosophical opposition to charter
2 schools.

3 It was made clear in the mayoral campaign.

4 After being sworn into office, one of the
5 very first actions of this Administration was an
6 attempt to deny charter school students access to
7 their schools.

8 I was proud to be part of a group of parents
9 who fought back on behalf of these students.

10 And though we were able to save those
11 schools, the Mayor had sent a clear message to our
12 public school parents about how his administration
13 views our right to choose the best public schools
14 for our children.

15 The current Administration has opposed a
16 growth of public charter schools despite the
17 overwhelming parent demand.

18 Administratively, they have hindered charter
19 schools' day-to-day operations.

20 And what should be a productive relationship,
21 with real choices for New York City parents, has,
22 instead, been one of division and unnecessary
23 strife.

24 Mayoral control is an opportunity for the
25 Administration to leave its mark on the future of

1 millions of New York City children.

2 It is a tremendous responsibility.

3 And while I support mayoral control, we must
4 ensure that mayors treat and support all public
5 schools equally, and that includes public charter
6 schools.

7 The Legislature can help do this by ensuring
8 that the laws and policies adapted by the State are
9 being implemented appropriately and without
10 unreasonable bias.

11 My daughter's traditional public school and
12 my son's public charter school deserve a system and
13 a mayor who is equally dedicated to their success.

14 Once again, I would just like to thank the
15 members of the Committee for hearing my testimony
16 today.

17 I hope you will consider it carefully as you
18 make decisions that affect all public school
19 children in New York City.

20 Thank you.

21 IAN ROWE: Good afternoon.

22 My name is Ian Rowe, and I also thank the
23 Committee for allowing me the opportunity to speak
24 at this hearing.

25 I'm a product, a proud product, of the

1 New York City Public School System.

2 I'm also the CEO of Public Prep, which is a
3 non-profit network of single-sex public schools that
4 now serve more than 1500 students across New York,
5 from pre-K through eighth grade.

6 Public Prep consists now of six campuses,
7 including Girls Prep Lower East Side, the first
8 all-girls public charter school in New York City,
9 and Boys Prep Bronx Elementary, the first and only
10 all-boys public elementary school in The Bronx.

11 Our philosophy is to start early with the end
12 in mind: to put all of our students, especially
13 New York City's highest-needs scholars, on a path to
14 college completion.

15 Our curriculum is designed to ensure our
16 students attain high levels of achievements across
17 academic subjects, such as the arts, history, music,
18 math, science, and literacy, while also helping our
19 students develop the character skills, like,
20 persistence and determination, and core values of
21 responsibility, merit, and scholarship, that we know
22 are so important to overcome the inevitable hurdles
23 to get to and through college.

24 Though we serve students across New York
25 City, we take particular pride in serving students

1 in the South Bronx where we're focusing all of our
2 future growth.

3 We just finished our random lottery process
4 for the 2016-17 school year.

5 We had 2,319 applications for less than
6 100 open seats at Girls Prep Bronx, and exactly
7 1,000 applications for fewer than 75 open seats at
8 Boys Prep Bronx.

9 It is bittersweet to have to tell more than
10 3,000 families in the South Bronx that the best we
11 can do is to put their sons and daughters on an
12 excruciatingly long wait list; especially, when all
13 those families are asking for is the opportunity to
14 send their children to a great public school.

15 I felt compelled to be here this afternoon to
16 speak on behalf of all these families desperate for
17 a good education, as well as the more than
18 100,000 children in New York City who attend public
19 charter schools.

20 As a school-network leader, I support the
21 concept of mayoral control in New York City, and
22 I believe it should continue.

23 Under strong mayoral leadership, this is a
24 far more effective way to run a school system than
25 the previous system of school-board control. It

1 empowers the mayor to marshal the resources of the
2 City to serve the city students.

3 However, as an educator, I do have concerns
4 about what mayoral control has meant for public
5 school students under the current Administration.

6 Public Prep has, on several occasions,
7 supported the Mayor's education agenda.

8 We have sought a collaborative relationship
9 with the Administration; not a combative one.

10 When the Mayor announced his two signature
11 education initiatives, which he spoke about
12 frequently at this hearing, universal pre-K and
13 dramatic expansion of after-school programs, we were
14 thrilled.

15 These were exactly the types of ideas, to
16 start early and extend learning time, which are very
17 aligned to how we believe we can help students
18 achieve their highest potential.

19 But when Public Prep applied for both pre-K
20 and after-school, we learned that every type of
21 public school was allowed to participate save one:
22 public charter schools.

23 For some reason, the Administration decided
24 public charter schools shouldn't even get the
25 chance.

1 While public charter schools, ultimately, won
2 an exhausting and time-consuming battle to be
3 allowed to offer UPK programming and to receive
4 funding for after-school, the question is: Why did
5 we have to face that battle at all?

6 We are public schools serving public school
7 students.

8 Public charter schools have consistently
9 faced an uphill climb to be treated the same as
10 other public schools in New York City, and have
11 often been demonized by the Mayor and the leadership
12 of the city's Department of Education.

13 Public Prep and other public charter schools
14 stand ready to work with the Mayor to overcome the
15 massive challenge we all face to provide a
16 high-quality education for the children of New York
17 City.

18 At Public Prep we have more than
19 300 incredibly talented team members who have
20 committed their life to improving education outcomes
21 for kids.

22 We want to help.

23 Mayoral control can be a tool to allow us all
24 to work together and do our level-best.

25 But a divisive approach stymies any real

1 opportunity for true systemwide partnership and
2 cooperation between the Administration and the
3 city's public charter schools.

4 At the end of the day, the individuals who
5 suffer most are our students, and their families
6 that have the highest aspirations for them.

7 It is for those reasons that I believe
8 hearings like this, where state leaders hear from
9 educators and parents --

10 Many of whom we have behind us. Thank you.

11 -- while they evaluate the-- while you
12 evaluate the Mayor's leadership of our school system
13 are so crucial.

14 The opportunity to lead the city's school
15 system is a privilege; not a right.

16 And any mayor, whether we were speaking of
17 the current Administration or future
18 administrations, must earn that privilege.

19 In order to do that, the mayor must represent
20 the interests of all children in New York City and
21 empower all parents, regardless of race, income
22 level, or ZIP code, to have the power to choose a
23 great public school, including public charter
24 schools, for their child.

25 Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to

1 speak at the hearing.

2 DERRELL BRADFORD: Chairman Marcellino,
3 Senator Latimer, Senator Krueger, I'd like to thank
4 you all for staying. This is a long day.

5 I have two points that echo much of what was
6 said earlier, and then just two more flourishes I'd
7 like to add.

8 The first one, and I think we heard it a lot
9 earlier, and I just want to borrow from
10 Winston Churchill, is that, you know: Mayoral
11 control is the worst form of governance but for all
12 the others.

13 When you consider what we had before, this
14 has created a tremendous opportunity for an
15 individual at the top to act with some speed and
16 some urgency on a vision, whether or not we always
17 agree with the vision.

18 And I think that's a dynamic in the schools
19 that's worth protecting.

20 The second one I would just say is that, and
21 the Mayor said it himself earlier, the single point
22 of accountability is crucial, and, to me, actually
23 creates dual-governance.

24 Because you are charged with renewing mayoral
25 control, there is a point of contact for you as

1 legislators, particularly when you talk about the
2 fact that the rest of the state sends such a large
3 sum of money to New York City for its public
4 schools.

5 But then there is also the governance
6 mechanism of elections.

7 There are people who will -- can decide
8 whether or not they like the direction the mayor is
9 going, on a myriad of issues, including schools, and
10 they'll get a chance to do that every four years.

11 So those are my two things that echo what was
12 said before.

13 The other two things would I just say is
14 that, it feels like folks want to extend mayoral
15 control, and the question really is, for how long?

16 And I would urge you all, despite the sort of
17 subtle heckling of charter schools earlier, to look
18 at charter-authorizing as a model for renewing
19 mayoral control.

20 Normally, an authorizer decides it wants to
21 give you more time and more space to be innovative
22 if you have a proven track record, if you have a
23 vision, if you have things under control.

24 If an authorizer does not feel like you have
25 those things, they may intervene, or they may give

1 you a shorter amount of time, including one year, to
2 prove that you deserve to continue to have the right
3 to run a school; or, in this case, to run all of the
4 schools.

5 So there's a powerful lesson there.

6 It has also helped us bring some of the best
7 public schools in America into existence,
8 particularly for low-income kids.

9 So I would just urge you to consult that one
10 too.

11 And the last one I would say, just to sort of
12 echo what Ian and my colleagues and others have
13 said, is that the Mayor has a ton of power.

14 What he should not be able to do is supercede
15 state law, particularly with regard to the
16 governance of charter schools.

17 And, whenever you consolidate power in an
18 individual, the thing I think you really want to do
19 is disperse power through choice as a check against
20 the individual doing the wrong thing, if you want to
21 call it that.

22 So, mayoral control is sort of only as
23 effective as a regular human being's ability to
24 police it in the interim.

25 And charter schools and school choice had

1 been great vehicles for parents to vote with their
2 feet, as the Mayor said earlier, on his vision, or
3 on the vision of Mayor Bloomberg before him.

4 So I would just put those four things out
5 there.

6 Again, it will be up to you to decide this.

7 I think most of my colleagues and folks who
8 work on change, particularly in urban districts,
9 think that mayoral control can be effective, but
10 it's effectiveness is totally about the Mayor, and
11 that's what I'm saying.

12 Thank you very much for having me.

13 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Certainly.

14 Thank you for your testimony.

15 So just to put it clear in my mind: All
16 three of you are in favor of extending and retaining
17 mayoral control; it's just a matter of time --
18 length of time?

19 IAN ROWE: I think it actually does raise a
20 very, I think, useful comparable, which is the
21 authorization that we have to live under, to
22 demonstrate that we have earned the right to
23 continue to run charters, which is an authorization
24 process, which, at maximum, is five years, but it
25 can also be three or one year, depending on

1 demonstrated performance.

2 JOE HERRERA: I believe, truly believe, that
3 we need a check to make sure that state law is being
4 followed in regards to charter and quality-education
5 opportunities for families in our communities.

6 And, I just want to ensure that the Mayor --
7 You know, my daughter goes to school with his
8 son at Brooklyn Tech. My son goes to Coney Island
9 Prep Charter School.

10 I just want every child and every parent to
11 be empowered to choose what works best for their
12 kids, and to have a mayor that's for all children;
13 not 90 percent, but 100 percent, of our children.

14 And to -- and I think it's up to the
15 Legislature to periodically just check on the Mayor
16 and make sure that he's following policies adopted
17 by the state law.

18 DERRELL BRADFORD: Yeah, Senator, just to
19 that point, you know, mayoral control is -- seems to
20 be the right fit for New York. It's not the right
21 fit for every place.

22 And I do think that the prior model had
23 everyone in charge, so no one was in charge.

24 And that the important checks against
25 consolidating power in the mayor rests with you, and

1 should, ultimately, rest with families in terms of
2 having more choices about where they send their
3 children can go o school.

4 IAN ROWE: And I think one of the powers of
5 state-authorization processes are, is that it's very
6 clear what the performance metrics are that you need
7 to hit on an ongoing basis, to preserve your
8 opportunity, you know, preserve your right, to run
9 schools.

10 And so even, for example, something like
11 graduation rates, which we've certainly said
12 multiple times, well, it's certainly a good thing if
13 more kids are graduated from high school.

14 But if you compare that to the percent of
15 kids entering the community college system that need
16 remedial education, then that's not as clear -- a
17 strong evidence of strong performance.

18 So, I would urge you to be really clear
19 about, what are the performance metrics by which we
20 would say you've earned the right to continue to
21 have control?

22 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Senator Latimer.

23 SENATOR LANZA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 I think some of my colleagues should have
25 stuck around, because I think they might have had

1 more detailed questions for you.

2 As a suburban legislator, I don't have the
3 same vantage point that some of them do about what's
4 happened, so I'm going to ask some very general
5 questions, some of the ones I asked to the Mayor
6 before on the structure, and this is perhaps my
7 ignorance.

8 How does the charter school community, the
9 aggregate of it, interact below the level of mayor
10 and chancellor with the system that's in place now?

11 In other words, the PEPs, the CECs; is
12 there any point of interaction between the schools
13 you represent and those structures that were created
14 when mayoral control was created?

15 IAN ROWE: Yeah, we have a lot of interaction
16 at multiple levels.

17 At the core level, at the school itself, our
18 public charter schools, we work very, very hard to
19 create very positive co-location relationships with
20 our district schools. That can range from sharing
21 dance programs, to professional development, and
22 there are other things that we try to do at the
23 school level, to make sure that we're all part of
24 one larger community sharing a building.

25 So that's the first, I guess, primary

1 interaction.

2 In terms of CEC and PEP, every time there is
3 a request for space, on either side, there's usually
4 something called a "building utilization plan," or
5 an "education impact statement," that has to be
6 reviewed. Usually, there are hearings at the
7 community education council. Those are typically
8 approved, or not. And then they have to be,
9 ultimately, voted on by the Mayor's PEP.

10 So, we've had a lot of interaction.

11 And, you know, we, again, generally try to
12 follow the rules, and make this a productive
13 interaction at every level.

14 DERRELL BRADFORD: Yeah, and I'm also on the
15 board of a large network of charter schools that was
16 talked about, but not talked about earlier.

17 And I would just say in two -- co-location is
18 really like a first date: it can go very well or it
19 can poorly.

20 But they don't all go poorly, which I think
21 is sort of a myth that is perpetuated.

22 There are lots of schools that have amazing
23 co-located relationships.

24 And it is also worth noting that the majority
25 of co-locations are between district schools.

1 They're not between district and charter schools.

2 But it is worth noting that, like anything,
3 it's about the people.

4 And there are some instances where things are
5 going swimmingly, and some instances where things
6 are going more -- where the going's more difficult.

7 SENATOR LANZA: So in the issue of
8 co-locations, where, I gather, the two schools share
9 the same physical plant, how common a practice is
10 that, out of 100 percent of all locations that you
11 have for charter schools?

12 How many of them wind up being co-located
13 with the public schools?

14 Just so I understand how widespread it is, or
15 isn't.

16 JOE HERRERA: Well, I just would like to
17 point out that, you know, the majority of
18 co-locations in New York City, who are actually
19 traditional public schools. Right?

20 90 percent of co-locations in New York City
21 are traditional public schools co-located with one
22 another.

23 You rarely hear about that.

24 What you hear about in the news, or when you
25 hear about, is when the charter schools co-locate.

1 And, again, this -- this -- this division
2 happens at the co-lo -- you know, through community
3 education councils, who are very -- most likely,
4 most times, are very opposed to the co-location
5 process when it comes to public charter schools, and
6 very silenced when it comes to traditional public
7 schools, in most cases.

8 And, again, just to make sure that there's
9 equality and all voices are heard, you know, as a
10 public charter school parent, I'm not able to serve
11 on the community education council, because --
12 parent -- public charter school parents, unless
13 they're -- they're -- I think the borough president
14 appoints you, you cannot actually serve on a
15 community education council.

16 So it's really a -- the voice of -- a missing
17 voice in that process as well.

18 SENATOR LANZA: Is the experience that you're
19 sharing equally spread out through the five
20 boroughs? Or there are some places where it works
21 better, some places where it works worst, based on
22 geography, or demography?

23 IAN ROWE: I would say it's building --
24 building to building.

25 OFF-CAMERA SPEAKER: Are you asking about the

1 quality of a co-location relationship?

2 SENATOR LANZA: Well, in general, because the
3 broader question was: How are the charter school
4 community getting along with the community that's
5 represented to the CECs, and then, ultimately, up to
6 the PEPs?

7 And you've indicated that it's a case-by-case
8 basis.

9 So I'm wondering if that case-by-case basis
10 is, more or, less better, based on any geographic
11 realities or any demographic realities?

12 I'm trying to get my hands around -- because,
13 just to go back to, you know, to one of the early
14 comments was, division and strife.

15 And I'm trying to get my hands around, you
16 know, what triggers the division and strife beyond,
17 obviously, there's ideological differences?

18 But, are there other differences, or other
19 things, that make this the way it is?

20 Because we're talking about the structure of
21 something, and then we're talking about the policy
22 of the people who administer that structure.

23 And we get to, you know, debate and discuss
24 in our conference, and then, ultimately, as the
25 Senate, with both of those factors in place.

1 So I'm just trying to understand, is there
2 any geographic or demographic realities to whether
3 there's more or less cooperation when you're dealing
4 with the existing structure of the, you know,
5 non-charter school public community?

6 IAN ROWE: I mean, the only thing I would say
7 is that, there is a concentration of charter
8 schools, particularly in the South Bronx, Central
9 Brooklyn, and Harlem.

10 And, so, when you have that level of high
11 concentration, then space becomes more of a, you
12 know, commodity in demand, and that certainly can
13 contribute to tension.

14 But on each individual building's, you know,
15 particular situation. Geography, I don't think
16 impacts that.

17 SENATOR LANZA: And is it the need to have
18 sufficient space, and the competition for space, is
19 that really the cutting-edge of the problem when you
20 get down to the grassroots level of this?

21 I assume the charter schools are in
22 stand-alone buildings, and that they're not part
23 of --

24 IAN ROWE: No, no, no.

25 The vast -- no, the vast majority -- or, a

1 significant majority of public charter schools are
2 co-located space.

3 SENATOR LANZA: All right. Just one final
4 question.

5 You know, the phrase that was used earlier on
6 was "Administrative hindering."

7 Can you give me a couple of examples of that
8 so I can understand what exactly it is you have run
9 into that has been, you know, objectionable?

10 IAN ROWE: Well, as I mentioned in my
11 testimony, the biggest challenge is, where we
12 weren't even allowed to participate in some of the
13 Mayor's major educational initiatives.

14 So the ability, for example, to serve
15 4-year-olds, to start them on the path to
16 college-completion, charters weren't even given the
17 legal right to have that opportunity.

18 And that was a big battle for us to earn
19 that.

20 The ability to serve after-school students,
21 beginning in Grade 6, which is a fantastic
22 opportunity to provide a whole host of additional
23 services and additional programming to our kids,
24 charter schools were excluded from that.

25 We fought, and we earned the right, which is

1 great, we now have an opportunity, but, we would
2 love to operate in a system where we're all equal
3 from the beginning.

4 SENATOR LANZA: Mr. Chairman, I'll defer to
5 my more knowledgeable colleague about these things.

6 But whenever I cross the line from
7 Westchester into The Bronx, I look to increase my
8 education on the topic.

9 SENATOR MARCELLINO: We'll check your
10 passport.

11 [Laughter.]

12 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Senator Krueger.

13 SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you,
14 Senator Marcellino, and Senator Latimer.

15 I'll try this one because it works.

16 Thank you.

17 One of the three of you said you were
18 motivated to come here to testify today because of
19 your concerns.

20 But, can I just clarify?

21 This was a by-invitation-only hearing, so you
22 were actually all invited hear here to testify? Is
23 that correct?

24 JOE HERRERA: Correct.

25 IAN ROWE: Yes, that's correct.

1 DERRELL BRADFORD: Yes.

2 SENATOR KRUEGER: Okay. Because I actually
3 heard from several other organization who represent
4 parents' groups and public schools, who weren't
5 invited to testify for the record,
6 Senator Marcellino.

7 So I'm hoping, in the second hearing, we'll
8 have an opportunity for other public school parents
9 and organizations who did want to testify, to be
10 able to.

11 So I hope that the invitation to this will be
12 opened in some way.

13 So, I appreciate you all for coming.

14 I want to thank the CEO of Public Prep for
15 testifying, with actually some experience running a
16 charter school.

17 For the other two gentlemen:

18 Mr. Herrera, your title is: Manager of
19 New York Elected Management, at Families for
20 Excellent Schools.

21 Can you clarify what that means to me?

22 JOE HERRERA: It's, actually, manager of
23 elected engagement.

24 I started, I was a volunteer -- parent
25 volunteer, back in 2011, when my child was -- when

1 I enrolled him into a public charter school.

2 It was housed in a community center located
3 in a NYCHA housing development. They had no gym.
4 They had no lunch room; kids ate in their
5 classrooms.

6 It was at that point where I became a
7 really -- really got into education advocacy.
8 Became an organizer in my community. I started
9 working with Families for Excellent Schools later in
10 2013. And I've just recently took on the position
11 of managing government relations.

12 SENATOR KRUEGER: And is that Family for
13 Excellent Schools, Inc., or Families for Excellent
14 Schools Advocacy?

15 JOE HERRERA: That is, Families for Excellent
16 Schools, non-profit (c)3. And we also have a (c)4
17 sister -- sister (c) -- yeah.

18 SENATOR KRUEGER: And I notice your budget
19 grew, from about 1 million, to 12 million dollars,
20 over a one-year period.

21 Can you explain how that happened?

22 JOE HERRERA: Well, if my budget grew that
23 much, I wouldn't be living in a one-bedroom
24 apartment.

25 But, the organization that I work for, that

1 is correct, the organization I work for.

2 I'm not really -- I don't have specifics on
3 the budget, but, it sounds about right.

4 SENATOR KRUEGER: So since you're doing
5 government affairs for them, would you ask them to
6 please file their paperwork, because they haven't
7 since 2012?

8 Because when I attempted to look up the
9 information, there's no information.

10 SENATOR MARCELLINO: I'll pass on the
11 message.

12 But, I'm actually here today, to, really,
13 just talk, and now speaking, about, you know, why
14 I got involved in an education-advocacy
15 organization.

16 And kind of -- this is, really, I represent
17 many families from my community, way before
18 I started working for an organization.

19 This organization has done a lot to amplify
20 the voices of parents who have normally been
21 silenced.

22 SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you.

23 And, Mr. Bradford, your organization is a
24 lobbying organization?

25 DERRELL BRADFORD: I am a registered

1 lobbyist, yes.

2 SENATOR KRUEGER: And the organization
3 itself, specifically, is a lobbying entity and a
4 campaign-distribution system?

5 Can you explain --

6 DERRELL BRADFORD: No.

7 SENATOR KRUEGER: No?

8 DERRELL BRADFORD: So we are a 501(c)(3).
9 We do have a PAC, out of which I've given no
10 money.

11 I registered as a lobbyist only because
12 I thought this might happen.

13 My role was actually -- my focus, in
14 rebooting the organization, was actually not to come
15 to Albany.

16 It was to -- because there are plenty of
17 other people who do that here and who do it really
18 well.

19 It was research and communication.

20 So, last year we released a report called
21 "Don't Cap Progress," on charter caps in New York.

22 We did some work on teacher-tenure reform and
23 teacher eval.

24 I did a lot of community meetings, and
25 engagement, and public speaking, and earned-media

1 around change in education, because it's very
2 important to me.

3 SENATOR KRUEGER: So, for you as well, I went
4 to your website and it does say you're a 501(c)(3).

5 DERRELL BRADFORD: Yes.

6 SENATOR KRUEGER: But, you don't file
7 paperwork with the Charities Bureau of New York
8 State or the IRS saying you're a 501(c)(3).

9 So I'm confused about your legal status is,
10 other than you lobby around charter school issues.

11 DERRELL BRADFORD: Well, allow me to clarify
12 that for you.

13 SENATOR KRUEGER: Yes.

14 DERRELL BRADFORD: So all of the CANs, of
15 which I am one, and there are seven others, are
16 under an umbrella 501(c)(3); that is, 50CAN, which
17 is in Washington, D.C.

18 SENATOR KRUEGER: And, yet, 50CAN has also
19 not registered with the Charities Bureau of New York
20 State to be doing work in New York State.

21 DERRELL BRADFORD: We have a huge compliance
22 team. I find that highly unlikely. But, I'm happy
23 to look it up for you --

24 SENATOR KRUEGER: All right, if you could
25 send that up to me --

1 DERRELL BRADFORD: -- and I'm happy to look
2 it up for you, Senator Krueger.

3 SENATOR KRUEGER: -- because I did a
4 download, and I couldn't -- thank you.

5 DERRELL BRADFORD: Indeed.

6 SENATOR KRUEGER: And your filings under
7 50CAN talk about over \$600,000 being spent in
8 campaign contributions.

9 But it also --

10 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Senator --

11 SENATOR KRUEGER: Yes?

12 SENATOR MARCELLINO: -- this is on mayoral
13 control.

14 Where are we going with this?

15 SENATOR KRUEGER: Well, I -- partly I'm going
16 with --

17 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Can we just --

18 SENATOR KRUEGER: -- we're calling this a
19 hearing on mayoral control.

20 You earlier stated --

21 DERRELL BRADFORD: Which we support.

22 SENATOR KRUEGER: -- we can take hearing
23 on --

24 Oh, good. Thank you.

25 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Which they said,

1 clearly, all three groups; and it's in their written
2 statements, have all said that they support mayoral
3 control. We're talking about the differentiation in
4 time.

5 If you want to go after each individual group
6 yourself, if you feel they've done something
7 illegal --

8 SENATOR KRUEGER: No, I want to highlight --

9 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Excuse me.

10 If you think they've done something illegal
11 or improper, there are ways to deal with that, and
12 perhaps you should do that.

13 But, this isn't the forum.

14 SENATOR KRUEGER: Well, actually, I think
15 what's improper is this was an invitation-only
16 hearing, where specific lobbying organizations were
17 invited to be representatives; organizations who
18 actually --

19 SENATOR MARCELLINO: This is not a typical.

20 There have been many other hearings held by
21 the Democrats when they were in charge, and the
22 Republicans when we're in charge --

23 SENATOR KRUEGER: I just wanted to clarify
24 who was invited to testify.

25 SENATOR MARCELLINO: We invited --

1 SENATOR KRUEGER: And the fact is that --

2 SENATOR MARCELLINO: -- a whole range of
3 individuals.

4 And to the end of what you said before, we
5 received no complaints.

6 Anyone who said they wanted to testify as an
7 individual will send us something in writing.

8 We haven't received that.

9 If they wanted to put it, we can put it as
10 part of the record.

11 There is a downstate hearing on the 19th
12 where other groups will be invited, and have been
13 invited, and will be speaking.

14 We've invited the Mayor to come back. We're
15 waiting for his accommodations.

16 And Chancellor Fariña said she would attend.

17 Can we just get on to the mayoral-control
18 aspect of it?

19 And if you want to go after these individual
20 groups, that's your prerogative.

21 SENATOR KRUEGER: No, I just wanted to
22 highlight --

23 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Can we just get back on
24 to --

25 SENATOR KRUEGER: -- who was invited to

1 testify to this hearing.

2 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Can we get back on to
3 mayoral control?

4 SENATOR KRUEGER: Yes.

5 All three of you, please answer the question:
6 Do you support continuation of mayoral
7 control for New York City?

8 SENATOR MARCELLINO: They've all said that.
9 It was asked and answered.

10 SENATOR KRUEGER: I'm asking them, I'm just
11 double-checking.

12 DERRELL BRADFORD: With caveats, as I've
13 stated; but, yes.

14 IAN ROWE: Yeah, as I've said, I think
15 mayoral control, with an oversight process, that has
16 explicit performance metrics that are agreed upon at
17 the outset, probably with increments of one, three,
18 and five years, which demonstrate that the person
19 who has control has earned the right to preserve the
20 opportunity to be in control.

21 JOE HERRERA: I vote for the --
22 Mayor de Blasio.

23 I voted for mayoral control.

24 And I also chose to put my children in the
25 schools that best suit them.

1 So, I am in favor of all three.

2 SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you.

3 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

4 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

5 Gentlemen, thank you for your time.

6 [Applause.]

7 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Mr. Joe Luft.

8 Go ahead.

9 Again, your written statement, if you have
10 one, we can submit that up here.

11 We'll pick it up. Don't worry about that.

12 Just, I'd appreciate if you would just
13 summarize and not read the whole thing.

14 JOSEPH LUFT: Good afternoon.

15 My name is Joseph Luft. I'm the executive
16 director of Internationals Network For Public
17 Schools. We're a non-profit based in New York City.

18 I would like to thank you all for holding
19 this hearing today on the extension of mayoral
20 control.

21 I am here to speak in support of a multiyear
22 extension on mayoral control.

23 Having served as a New York City teacher and
24 principal for 15 years, in addition to working with
25 non-profit organizations, I can personally attest to

1 the benefits of the increased accountability and
2 coordination that come with mayoral control.

3 Internationals Network, my organization, is
4 the sole school- and professional-development
5 organization devoted exclusively to working with
6 adolescent immigrant English-language learners who
7 are new arrivals to the country.

8 The 15 international high schools in New York
9 City have demonstrated outstanding levels of success
10 in graduating immigrant youth prepared for college
11 and careers.

12 Internationals Network works to open and
13 support small high schools that serve
14 recently-arrived immigrants, and this work was made
15 possible through successful partnerships with
16 New York City Department of Ed, with strong support
17 from the mayor.

18 Our organization is now one of several
19 non-profits that have a track record of partnership
20 with the Department of Education, to provide support
21 to schools through a structure which is now called
22 the "affinity-group structure."

23 These support organizations have successfully
24 developed a wide variety of school models that serve
25 students who have, historically, had limited access

1 to higher-quality, rigorous, and supportive
2 educational options in New York City.

3 These groups have benefited the system more
4 broadly by bringing innovations into the system that
5 they've created.

6 As a result, thousands of students and
7 families across the city have realized their dreams
8 and gone on to success in college and in the
9 workforce.

10 Our organization, and others, have had a
11 significant and lasting impact on the school system,
12 as a whole, by injecting these new ideas and models
13 for underserved students.

14 Under mayoral control, schools in New York
15 City have increased graduation and attendance rates,
16 students are safer at school.

17 The 15 schools in Internationals Network in
18 New York City serve over 5,000 English-language
19 learners, and provide a highly successful model with
20 proven effectiveness. Evidence backs this up.

21 The average graduation rate for our New York
22 City schools in 2014-15 was 71 percent, compared to
23 a graduation rate of 34 percent for ELA statewide.

24 Average attendance rate across our schools
25 during the same period was 89 percent.

1 96 percent of the students in our schools
2 have reported feeling safe in their classrooms.

3 I urge the Senate to consider the positive
4 effects of a multiyear extension of mayoral control.

5 In the end, mayoral control ensures there is
6 direct accountability for the success of New York
7 City's public schools.

8 The support from the highest levels of City
9 leadership is essential to supporting ambitious and
10 sustainable change over time.

11 As a representative of Internationals
12 Network, and as a parent of two New York City public
13 school children, I hope you will extend mayoral
14 control to make sure that our organization and other
15 non-profit partners can continue to play an
16 essential role in supporting schools that serve so
17 many of the underserved youth in New York City.

18 I thank you for the opportunity to testify
19 today, and for holding this hearing.

20 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you for being
21 here. We appreciate your testimony.

22 One of the staff will take the forms from
23 you.

24 Senator Latimer?

25 SENATOR LANZA: No questions. Thank you.

1 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Liz?

2 SENATOR KRUEGER: Can you just repeat for me,
3 you have how many schools in New York City?

4 JOSEPH LUFT: 15.

5 SENATOR KRUEGER: 15.

6 JOSEPH LUFT: Yes.

7 SENATOR KRUEGER: Much larger than I thought.

8 I know of the school in my district off
9 Union Square, on Irving Place.

10 JOSEPH LUFT: Yes.

11 SENATOR KRUEGER: Do you have others in
12 Manhattan?

13 JOSEPH LUFT: Manhattan International
14 High School in the Julia Richmond Complex.

15 It's one of our oldest schools, yes.

16 SENATOR KRUEGER: And being -- being
17 defined -- that is also in my district, yes. It's a
18 very good school.

19 They're defined as members of your
20 consortium, but they're also defined as just public
21 high schools?

22 JOSEPH LUFT: They're all --

23 SENATOR KRUEGER: What's the relationship?

24 JOSEPH LUFT: -- so they're all traditional
25 public schools, or, district schools.

1 Our role is as a -- we're a non-profit
2 organization.

3 We provide support to those schools through
4 some leadership-development training, coaching for
5 principals, professional development, and
6 instructional coaching, and some curricula resources
7 for those schools as well.

8 I was also the founding -- full disclosure,
9 I was the founding principal of one of the schools
10 out in Flushing, in Queens.

11 SENATOR KRUEGER: So you have been expanding
12 the model?

13 JOSEPH LUFT: Yes.

14 We're also -- we have schools outside of
15 New York City as well, but most of our schools are
16 here.

17 SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you very much.

18 JOSEPH LUFT: You're welcome.

19 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

20 I'm going to probably butcher this last name,
21 but, Georgia M. Ascitutto.

22 Correct me if I'm wrong, please.

23 GEORGIA M. ASCIUTTO: Hello, Mr. Chairman,
24 and Senators.

25 I'm joined by my colleague Jennifer Pyle,

1 Deputy Director of the Big 5.

2 My testimony is brief, and I will get
3 started.

4 The Conference of Big 5 school districts, on
5 behalf of New York City public schools, strongly
6 supports a multiyear extension of New York City's
7 current school-governance structure as requested by
8 Mayor de Blasio.

9 This model was established pursuant to
10 Chapter 91 of the laws of 2002, and has garnered
11 widespread local support throughout the city's
12 education community, including parent organizations,
13 and among the business sector and public-interest
14 advocates.

15 Let me begin by stating that there is
16 precedent for policy decisions pertaining to the
17 governance of urban school districts in New York
18 State to be developed in a manner that is reflective
19 of individual community interests.

20 This is most striking in the Big 5 school
21 districts.

22 These districts are differentiated from all
23 other school districts in New York State with regard
24 to their fiscal dependency, yet they also have
25 varied local government structures.

1 Outside of the Big 5, school-board members in
2 New York State are elected on a uniform school-board
3 election and budget vote day on the third Tuesday in
4 May, and this is not the case in our districts.

5 New York City has mayoral-control-governance
6 structure, with the citywide Panel for Education
7 Policy and 32 community district educational
8 councils.

9 The other Big 5 have distinctly different
10 models.

11 In Yonkers, the school board is appointed by
12 the mayor, and the mayor exercises financial and
13 operational management of the school districts.

14 In Rochester and Syracuse, school-board
15 members are elected at large in November during the
16 general election, and run on political party lines,
17 with school-board members taking office on
18 January 1st, in the middle of the school year.

19 In Buffalo, 6 of the 9 school-board seats are
20 district-specific seats with 3-year terms, and
21 3 seats are at large for 5-year terms, making all
22 9 school-board member terms expire every 15 years.

23 And as also noteworthy, that Buffalo's
24 school-board election, which was held yesterday, is
25 unlike all other elected school boards in the state.

1 These different statutes are important
2 because they confirm that education-policy decisions
3 regarding school governance are made based on local
4 factors.

5 New York City's current governance structure
6 has served parents and students well.

7 Student achievement in New York City has
8 shown consistent improvement since mayoral control
9 was established.

10 As you've already heard, graduation rates and
11 test scores have risen steadily.

12 Furthermore, the dropout rate is at an
13 all-time low and more students are enrolling in
14 college.

15 Much of this positive news can be attributed
16 to Mayor de Blasio's Equity in Excellence plan for
17 New York City schools.

18 The Mayor and Chancellor Fariña are committed
19 to goals, including 80 percent of students
20 graduating from high school on time, and all
21 students reading by second grade.

22 Mayor de Blasio's focus on early literacy has
23 been unwaivering, as has been his pledge to provide
24 pre-kindergarten for all children.

25 The City remains committed to rigor at all

1 levels, including an expansion of AP courses and
2 ensuring all children graduate career- and
3 college-ready.

4 Under the leadership of Chancellor Fariña,
5 the New York City school system has expanded
6 opportunities and programs for all students, and
7 increased instructional support and initiatives
8 under the renewal schools' program, as you heard
9 about.

10 The district has also invested
11 significantly in the provision of critical
12 professional-development opportunities for teachers
13 and principals, and placed a great emphasis on
14 efforts to recruit and retain teachers and
15 administrators, particularly in shortage areas such
16 as bilingual education.

17 The Chancellor's hands-on approach and
18 responsiveness to students, parents, teachers, and
19 administrators has proven to be very successful in
20 the over 50 town hall meetings; or as she said
21 earlier, closer to 100, has certainly bolstered
22 community engagement in unprecedented ways.

23 In our view, this all speaks to a
24 continuation of the current school-governance
25 structure, and the Conference of Big 5 school

1 districts urges you to provide a multiyear extension
2 for mayoral control.

3 Thank you.

4 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Go ahead.

5 SENATOR LANZA: Just one question.

6 Georgia, since you've looked at other models,
7 and every model is different, we're dealing with the
8 issue of how long an extension should be for. And
9 there's been three different examples of how we've
10 done it: when we originally established it and the
11 two times we've renewed it.

12 Do you have any metric or any indicator as to
13 what the number of years make particular sense?

14 As an example, when we renew sales-tax bills,
15 we do them, routinely, for two years. Hotel-tax
16 bills, routinely, for three years.

17 I'm wondering if you advise that there's any
18 sort of any routine amount of time that should be in
19 the extension of mayoral control?

20 GEORGIA M. ASCIUTTO: We would support
21 Mayor de Blasio's request for seven years.

22 We don't have an expiration in our other
23 models in our other school districts.

24 So I don't know if that's helpful, or not.

25 I mean, certainly, a short term just raises

1 to the concerns of inconsistency, and is not good
2 for the system; for teachers and parents and
3 students.

4 So I think, certainly, a longer term than
5 one year or two years or three years would be
6 helpful.

7 SENATOR LANZA: Thank you.

8 SENATOR MARCELLINO: The problem with that
9 is, the Mayor's term is four years.

10 So if we give him seven years, it goes beyond
11 this individual, and you don't know what the
12 policies of the incoming mayor will be.

13 So, I don't know if it should be restricted
14 to the term of a mayor and not to go beyond that, to
15 be renewed after that, or something to effect.

16 I think it has to be taken into
17 consideration.

18 But if you're looking for something that goes
19 beyond the term of a person, then you're running the
20 risk of that next person coming in may not like some
21 of the policies that the prior administration set
22 up, and you'll have fight and a warfare.

23 So that's something to be into consideration
24 when making the decision.

25 Liz.

1 SENATOR KRUEGER: No, I don't.

2 Thank you very much for your testimony.

3 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you, ladies.

4 Appreciate it.

5 Is Robert Lowry here?

6 Go right ahead, please.

7 ROBERT LOWRY: Yes, Chairman Marcellino,
8 Senator Latimer, Senator Krueger, I'm Robert Lowry,
9 deputy director of the New York State Council of
10 School Superintendents.

11 Our membership includes community
12 superintendents within New York City and some other
13 superintendent-level officials.

14 We also provide professional-development
15 opportunities for other administrators within the
16 New York City public schools.

17 Thank you for the invitation to provide
18 testimony today.

19 And thank you, also, for all your support in
20 the new state budget.

21 No one should desire a system -- or, a return
22 to the school-governance structure that preceded
23 mayoral control in New York City, and I say that
24 despite the fact that our organization lost all its
25 New York City members for a time when mayoral

1 control was first implemented.

2 Under the prior law, the city schools were
3 overseen by a central board of education comprised
4 of seven members appointed by six different
5 authorities: two by the mayor, five by each of the
6 borough presidents.

7 It was accountable to no one; not to the
8 mayor, nor to the voters.

9 There were also community school districts,
10 each elected by voters and their communities.

11 And this made it impossible to provide
12 consistent guidance to schools, and to contribute
13 equitable funding for all the children across the
14 city.

15 In the 20 years preceding mayoral control,
16 10 different men served as chancellor, an average of
17 one every other year.

18 The system was denied stability and top
19 leadership essential for a sustained, effective
20 implementation of school improvements and
21 strategies.

22 Under the prior system, the central board
23 members received compensation, employed staff, and
24 sought to indulge in day-to-day supervision of
25 school operations, and this also impeded effective

1 administration of leadership.

2 Under the old structure with the community
3 school boards, superintendents answered to those
4 elected boards, and reports of corruption and
5 mismanagement due to community board influence were
6 common.

7 Less dramatically, but just as harmful, is
8 the sense that the dispersion of authority made it
9 impossible to establish or advance citywide
10 priorities, nor was the system able to address
11 concerns about equitable distribution of resources.

12 The mayoral-control legislation replaced
13 that, making the -- giving the mayor the authority
14 to appoint a chancellor, and the chancellor to
15 appoint the community district superintendents.

16 In the years since mayoral control was first
17 enacted, there have been ongoing adjustments in the
18 responsibility given to intermediate-level district
19 administration.

20 Initially, the community schools -- community
21 superintendents were replaced by 10 regional
22 superintendents and 110 local instructional
23 supervisors. These officials were focused on
24 instruction and they lacked broad authority over
25 schools.

1 And, later, these offices were abolished and
2 replaced with a system which required principals to
3 select a school-support organization among a dozen
4 or so options, and this structure also emitted a
5 strong intermediate-level administration.

6 The latest iteration strikes a good balance.
7 It restores the position of the community
8 superintendent, with clear responsibilities over the
9 selection of principals and all school operations,
10 including accountability for student achievement,
11 and parent and community engagement, while retaining
12 capacity for appropriate central direction.

13 Since the enactment of mayoral control, there
14 have been various systemic improvements.

15 And you've heard about the expansion of
16 pre-K, from 19,000 students, I think three years
17 ago, to over 65,000 this year.

18 Also, the effort to expand community schools.

19 And next fall, an effort to try and
20 ensure that every high school student has access to
21 AP classes.

22 Most importantly, under mayoral control,
23 we've seen dramatic improvements in outcomes.

24 This year, over 70 percent of high school
25 students graduated, up from under 50 percent prior

1 to mayoral control.

2 And, notably, this includes gains across all
3 ethnic groups, with those for Black and Hispanic
4 students more than twice as great as those for White
5 students.

6 And also under mayoral control, the
7 performance of New York City students on state
8 assessments is, essentially, the same as for
9 students in the remainder of the state as a whole.

10 Of course, many factors contributed to this,
11 including the various initiatives, and it's
12 difficult to implement those kinds of strategic
13 priorities without strong central authority.

14 We've also seen improvements in funding for
15 New York City schools coming from the City itself.

16 And I attribute that to the fact that the
17 Mayor is now accountable for results.

18 Since the adoption of mayoral control, the
19 City's increased its local support for its schools
20 at, roughly, twice the rate for the remainder of the
21 state.

22 Prior to mayoral control, the City often
23 lagged behind the rest of the state in its local
24 support for its schools.

25 Citing the virtues of mayoral control for one

1 city might be seized on as indicating support for
2 that proposition for all cities; but, New York City
3 is utterly unique.

4 It's nearly twice the size of Chicago, and
5 enrolls more than 20 times as many students as
6 Buffalo, the next largest district in our state.

7 Even Staten Island, the smallest of the five
8 boroughs, enrolls more than 50 percent more students
9 than Buffalo.

10 Our members are employees of the communities
11 they serve; and, accordingly, our basic position is
12 that changes in the design of school governance for
13 our large urban district, including mayoral control,
14 should reflect the consensus sentiments of the
15 communities the school systems serve.

16 When the New York City Mayoral Control Law
17 was enacted, there was a strong and widespread sense
18 that the governance model in place at that time was
19 not working.

20 Today, in contrast, public sentiment towards
21 the state of the city schools is impressively
22 strong.

23 Every year, the City has been doing surveys
24 of parents and teachers of their satisfaction with
25 the schools, and those results are impressively

1 high, in the vicinity of 95 percent of parents
2 saying that they are satisfied with the education
3 their children are receiving.

4 Accordingly, for all these foregoing reasons,
5 we strongly urge extension of mayoral control for
6 the New York City schools.

7 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Would that include
8 the -- a term that would exceed the term of the
9 elected mayor?

10 ROBERT LOWRY: We would support the mayor's
11 request for a seven-year extension.

12 In addition, I make the general statement
13 that, you know, just as it was unhealthy for the
14 city to have this constant churning of chancellors,
15 the uncertainty of continuing short-term extensions
16 in the basic governance structure is problematic,
17 creating the uncertainty, and perhaps making it
18 difficult to attract someone like a Carmen Fariña to
19 serve as chancellor.

20 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

21 SENATOR LANZA: Answered the one question
22 I had, Rob.

23 Thank you.

24 SENATOR KRUEGER: If I may, sir?

25 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Go ahead.

1 SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you.

2 This is an addendum to Senator Marcellino's
3 question.

4 So, given your experience overseeing school
5 districts all over the state, if we made the
6 timeline for mayoral-control decisions parallel to
7 mayoral terms, couldn't you walk yourself into a
8 brand new mayor coming in, suddenly having to
9 confront a radical change in the statutes for the
10 school system in New York?

11 And don't you think that would be sort of an
12 overwhelming new problem for any new administration
13 coming in?

14 JOSEPH LUFT: I would anticipate that.

15 And I would also just say, you know, I'm
16 not -- I never lived in New York City.

17 But, observing from a distance, back in the
18 1990s, working in this building, and the Capitol,
19 that system was horrid, and that is the default
20 option if mayoral control expires: going back to
21 that system.

22 And I don't think anyone should want that.

23 SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you.

24 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

25 Julie Marlette.

1 Miss Marlette is the director of government
2 relations -- governmental relations, New York State
3 School Boards Association.

4 JULIE MARLETTE: Good afternoon,
5 Chairman Marcellino.

6 Thank you so much for inviting me.

7 And Senators Krueger and Latimer, thanks so
8 much for staying here for me.

9 However, in the interest of time, and knowing
10 that you all want to get off to session, I believe
11 you said it started at 3:00, I want to just honor
12 your request, and I'm not going to read my
13 statement, which I believe you have in front of you.

14 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Bless you.

15 JULIE MARLETTE: But, instead, just make a
16 few brief points and try to preemptively answer the
17 questions that I think we've heard most commonly
18 today, which is to say:

19 First and foremost, that the New York State
20 School Boards Association does, in fact, represent,
21 as well as over 600 other districts, the city school
22 district of the city of New York.

23 And on behalf of our membership, we are
24 supporting the Mayor's request for a seven-year
25 extension to mayoral control.

1 I know that the question has come up
2 repeatedly today, whether such an extended extension
3 makes sense, as it may exceed the term of the
4 sitting mayor.

5 And I would say that, while that's certainly
6 an interesting conversation point, and I think it's
7 one worthy of the discussion that's been had today,
8 the reasons that we would support that, are that
9 seven years is long enough that it provides a real
10 sense of stability.

11 And though I know I'm echoing some of the
12 preceding testifiers by saying that, I think that
13 stability and that ability for long-term planning is
14 incredibly important for the school district, right
15 from the top to the bottom, to the youngest student
16 entering to the person making the largest decisions
17 in the Mayor's Office and in the DOE.

18 Second, I think that, you know, if there's
19 any comfort to be brought by looking at history,
20 there's a precedent for that kind of change,
21 because I believe if we looked back to the 2009
22 reauthorization, I believe we found ourselves in an
23 election year where we didn't know who would be
24 leading the city in the next year; but at the same
25 time, we're faced with having to make a decision

1 about whether or not to reauthorize mayoral control.

2 And we did so, and I believe we did so for a
3 number of years. Five, if my memory serves.

4 Those are the two overarching points I wanted
5 to just address preemptively, without waiting for
6 your questions.

7 And I am certainly happy to stay and answer
8 questions for as long as you'd like.

9 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you.

10 SENATOR KRUEGER: You answered my question.

11 Thank you.

12 SENATOR MARCELLINO: My only question would
13 be: If you go seven years, for example, you've got
14 one full term, and three years into the second -- if
15 the person is reelected, three years into the second
16 term. And then you're going to have a new mayor
17 after a year.

18 So, eventually, you're going to run into that
19 problem of the overlapping, or the inconsistency,
20 where there's going to be a change.

21 So, the new mayor is going to come in and
22 still going to be -- have to deal with that problem.

23 JULIE MARLETTE: And I certainly don't think
24 I would advocate to deliberately link up those terms
25 starting and ending as sort of a condition of

1 renewal.

2 I think that seven years, though, is a time
3 frame that we certainly know is long enough to
4 provide against stability and consistency in
5 long-term planning.

6 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Why not eight?

7 JULIE MARLETTE: I certainly think the Mayor
8 would support eight, as would I.

9 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Why question is, it
10 seems to be an arbitrary number.

11 I don't know the origin of that "seven
12 years."

13 We're going to find that out.

14 But the question in my mind is just the
15 terminology, and seeking the term.

16 And, one year, two years, three years, four
17 years, these are numbers that are picked out there.

18 There's got to be good, logical reason for
19 it, and we're going to get more testimony from the
20 City, and we'll see what comes from that.

21 But, thank you for your testimony.

22 JULIE MARLETTE: No problem.

23 SENATOR LANZA: I'd like to make one point,
24 just before Julie goes, only because you're here and
25 this is the end of the hearing.

1 I've avoided making statements, and more
2 questions.

3 But, what I'm looking for out of this process
4 is a standard number of years, and I want to see
5 that replicated in the future.

6 I want us to have stability.

7 If we're going to have five, seven, whatever
8 that number is, that ought to be what we do from
9 here on.

10 So it's not a question of what any one mayor
11 requests, or, we're happy with this mayor, we're
12 unhappy with this mayor, then we start playing with
13 the numbers on the basis of that.

14 A standard number would make sense to me.

15 The second thing is, whatever number we have,
16 we still have the right to revisit any legislation
17 anytime we want.

18 We talk about things in perpetuity, but in
19 the next session, we could reopen any issue that we
20 have said has been closed, if that's the choice of
21 the legislators.

22 So I think we have the option if certain
23 circumstances warrant it.

24 So, in my interest, and your comment, and
25 Bob Lowry's comment, and Georgia Ascitutto's comment,

1 it's just to see what thinking that you've had.

2 Not only what the Mayor's requested, but what
3 thinking you've head, because you've had experience
4 in dealing with many other districts that have
5 things that -- not just control issues, but things
6 that are on some kind of a cycle; and, what's a
7 logical amount of cycle?

8 So, with that, thank you, Mr. Chairman, for
9 letting me share those things.

10 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you very much for
11 your testimony.

12 The meeting is adjourned.

13 JULIE MARLETTE: Thank you, Chairman.

14
15 (Whereupon, at approximately 2:37 p.m.,
16 the public hearing held before the New York State
17 Senate Standing Committee on Education concluded,
18 and adjourned.)

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