Department of Education

TESTIMONY OF NEW YORK CITY SCHOOLS CHANCELLOR RICHARD A. CARRANZAON THE PROPOSED 2019–2020 STATE EXECUTIVE BUDGET

February 6, 2019

Good afternoon Senate Finance Chair Krueger, Senate Education Chair Mayer, Assembly Ways and Means Chair Weinstein, Assembly Education Chair Benedetto, Senate NYC Education Subcommittee Chair Liu, and members of those respective committees. With me is Lindsey Oates, Chief Financial Officer for the New York City Department of Education (DOE). It is my honor and distinct pleasure to be before you today to discuss New York City's public schools and our incredible students and families. I know that for many of you, this is your first time chairing these hearings, just as it is my first time testifying, and I'm looking forward to embarking on this journey together.

This is my 11th month as New York City Schools Chancellor, and even though I have learned so much, I know there will always be more for me to see and experience in our schools. I want to thank those of you who have joined me on school visits and town halls, or taken the time to meet with me to tell me about your districts. Since my arrival, I have met with parents, students, and community members as I toured schools throughout the City—at the town halls I do in every Community School District, at my regular meetings with parent leaders from across the City, and through the brand-new parent forums Mayor de Blasio and I have recently undertaken. What we hear from parents *must* inform the policies we make to move the system forward—we can't do things *to* communities, and we can't only do things *for* communities. We have to do things *with* communities.

For those of you who don't yet know me, I want to briefly share my vision for the City's public schools. As a lifelong educator, I believe that our students deserve exactly what their parents envision when they enroll their children in our schools and entrust them to our care: nothing short of the American Dream. I know that, as the son of two blue-collar workers and as a child who entered kindergarten speaking only Spanish, a strong public education is the greatest gift I ever received, and that our City, State, and nation's future economic viability is sitting in our classrooms. We must meet our responsibility to our children, and that includes doing some things that will not be easy: reversing historic inequities, empowering communities, and putting our resources where we need them most to ensure that our children are on track for college and careers. We must advance equity now.

Our schools are the strongest they have ever been. Just last week, we announced our most recent four-year graduation rate: 75.9 percent, the highest in the City's history. This included increases across all groups, and the largest increase for black students and Hispanic students, who saw increases of 2.1 percentage points and 1.6 percentage points, respectively. We also saw increases

in our graduation rates for English Language Learners, former English Language Learners, and students with disabilities, as well as our lowest dropout rate ever, 7.5 percent.

Based on what we've heard from communities and Mayor de Blasio's own experience as a public school parent, we have launched and expanded our Equity and Excellence for All agenda, investing $4 billion in key initiatives to support our students and schools. We've given more students than ever access to the kind of programming that prepares them for college and careers and motivates them for life. Our College Access for All program is now reaching every single middle and high school, and we have seen a record high 59% of our students enrolling in postsecondary education, an eight-point increase under this administration. We have opened 47 new Career and Technical Education programs over the past three years, bringing us to over 300 programs serving 64,000 students. A record 134,000 students are learning computer science, across all grade levels. 75 percent of our high school students now have access to Advanced Placement (AP) classes, with 252 high schools offering new AP courses, including 82 that never had them before. Perhaps most significantly, record numbers of students are not only taking these exams for the first time, but also passing them; we are hoping to announce our most recent gains on those tests in the coming weeks. Our goal is to have all New York City high school students have access to five AP classes by fall 2021, which is why we are grateful for and supportive of the Executive's proposal to increase funding for AP expansion.

I am also very excited about our recently announced Collaborative Schools Model, undertaken jointly with the United Federation of Teachers and known colloquially as the "Bronx Plan" (although we expect many schools outside of the Bronx to participate). In this grassroots effort, principals and teachers will work together to address local challenges and concerns, and will receive coaching and training as well as additional pay for teachers in some "hard-to-staff" areas to move their schools forward. We are very excited about all the schools we had apply to be a part of this new model and are hoping to announce the final list of participants in the near future.

For the past five years, we have received funding for our successful Pre-K for All initiative. This could not have happened if you had not stepped up and advocated for the funding we needed. The number of 4-year-olds who have access to a free, full-day, high-quality pre-K seat is more than triple what it was before the Pre-K for All expansion. As we continue to grow and strengthen that system—including announcing 47 new pre-k Dual Language programs across all five boroughs on Monday—and roll out 3-K for All, we are hopeful that our State funding can continue for another five years.

It's important for our students to have equitable access to state-of-the-art learning facilities that equip them with the tools they need to succeed. That's why our newly announced $17 billion proposed Capital Plan—the largest ever—includes funding for so many critical improvements: the creation of 57,000 new seats in the areas that need them the most, meeting the administration's promise to create 83,000 school seats citywide; $280 million to accelerate the Mayor's AC for All initiative and ensure every classroom in the City will have air conditioning by 2021, a year ahead of schedule; and $750 million to make schools more accessible citywide. The plan also allocates $230 million for the removal of Transportable Classroom Units (TCUs), $750 million towards improving internet bandwidth and technology, and $550 million for new

Pre-K and 3-K centers, to be supplemented by the funding we received from the State's Smart Schools Bond Act.

I want to pause here for a moment and thank all of you for your work and advocacy on the Smart Schools Bond Act over the last few years. Last spring, we received our $400 million allocation for Pre-K and TCU removal, and this fall we received our remaining $383 million for improving internet bandwidth and technology in our schools. I know how hard many of you advocated for these important funds for our schools, and I look forward to engaging with all of you as we put that funding into action. I want to particularly thank Assemblymember Nolan for all that she's done to make these funds a reality for our children.

I also want to thank the Legislature, particularly the Assembly and Speaker Heastie, for all their work on the My Brother's Keeper program, which I was gratified to see in the Executive's budget proposal this year. The My Brother's Keeper program has allowed our districts and schools to create and run some amazing programs for our students and their families, and has presented a remarkable opportunity.

I want to thank you for these investments you've supported, but I also think it's important to take a step back and discuss why these investments are so important, and what they're driving at: advancing equity now. To us, equity means making sure every student has the resources and opportunities they need to achieve their highest potential. It means acknowledging that some students may need more or different things than other students, and it's our job to find a way to provide those things for all of our students. Equity is about having a holistic vision about what it takes to make a school system successful and doing everything you can to execute that vision.

These are our guiding principles when making decisions about what schools need, and I was not surprised that the school-by-school numbers we reported in our New York State School Funding Transparency Form showed indisputably that our resources are going where they are needed most. New York City spends 21.3 percent more on students in our highest-poverty schools than our lowest-poverty schools. There is also higher per-pupil spending at our schools with the greatest percentage of black and Hispanic students, students with disabilities, and Multilingual Learners, which is how we've begun referring to English Language Learners. These new reporting requirements were intended to determine whether or not districts were driving funds to the students who need them the most; the conclusion in our case is a resounding yes.

For this reason, we respectfully disagree with both the premise and the implementation of the Executive's proposal. I do not believe that this proposal would drive equity throughout our system. Our analysis of the Executive's language revealed that this would mandate 75 percent of our funding increase go to 22 percent of our schools, leaving out almost 1,300 schools. Due to expected rising costs and mandated expenses, the remaining 25 percent will simply not be enough to fund the remaining almost 1,300 schools. Some of those schools may be forced to make hard decisions— we would be taking from Peter to pay Paul. Moreover, the formula laid out in the language will not include some of the schools in our system we know are the most in need of additional resources. For example, out of the 124 New York City schools that the State Education Department recently identified as in need of Comprehensive Support and

Improvement (CSI) or Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI), 87 would not qualify for this targeted funding.

Overall, approximately 80 percent of New York City schools receive Title I funding. Focusing on some of our schools at the exclusion of others is not a successful formula for ensuring equity and success for our students. Our philosophy on this is simple: a rising tide lifts all boats. We are not in the business of picking winners and losers, but making sure all our schools are getting what they need.

This is why the DOE created and uses our Fair Student Funding (FSF) formula to equitably fund all of our schools. The FSF formula allows us to examine a school's need based on a variety of factors, including but not limited to poverty, number of Multilingual Learners, and number), number of students with disabilities, and determine how much funding they would need in order to meet those needs. We calculate that number even though we know we do not have the funding we need to reach it, because it gives us a guidepost to work towards and a way to make sure we are treating everyone equitably. This is why last year, when we knew the $334 million increase we received from the State would not be enough to raise schools to where we wanted them to be, we pitched in $125 million of our own funding to raise the floor at 850 schools, ensuring that every school in the City is at least at 90 percent of their Fair Student Funding and to bring the average across the city to 93 percent. This is why this administration has devoted $800 million total toward raising that floor, an investment we know has driven our progress over the last several years.

This is why, early on, we made the conscious choice to fund what we see as our neediest schools at 100 percent, because we believe in putting our resources where we know they are needed the most. We believe our approach toward equitable funding is the one that will give all of our students the opportunity to succeed. The only thing preventing us from funding all our schools at 100% percent is the reluctance to fulfill the promise of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity. I know how dedicated many of you are to seeing this promise fulfilled and getting our students the $1.2 billion they are owed, and you have my deepest gratitude. As the Executive budget proposal stands right now, New York City is receiving a $282 million increase, which will barely be enough to cover our increase in mandated services, including payments to charter schools and special education services; it is a $148 million shortfall in the budgeted level necessary to maintain current services in our schools. Of course, restraining the way we can spend 75 percent of those resources will only exacerbate this problem.

Let me be clear: our successes are your successes. Our accomplishments are your accomplishments. We know that getting our students the resources they so richly deserve only happens because of your hard work and advocacy, and I thank you for that.

These successes, including our record-high graduation rate and postsecondary enrollment, and increased opportunity and access for students who need it most, would not be possible without Mayoral Control of our schools. As someone who has until very recently been the leader of school districts with very different management systems, I can say with confidence that the things we have managed to accomplish for the New York City school system would have not

been possible without the direct accountability, responsibility, and authority that comes with Mayoral Control.

I thank you all for taking the time to listen today, and look forward to your questions.