

1 BEFORE THE NEW YORK STATE SENATE FINANCE
AND ASSEMBLY WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEES

2 -----

3 JOINT LEGISLATIVE HEARING

4 In the Matter of the
2016-2017 EXECUTIVE BUDGET ON
5 ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

6 -----

7 Hearing Room B
Legislative Office Building
8 Albany, New York

9 January 27, 2016
9:38 a.m.

10

11 PRESIDING:

12 Senator Catharine M. Young
Chair, Senate Finance Committee

13

Assemblyman Herman D. Farrell, Jr.
14 Chair, Assembly Ways & Means Committee

15 PRESENT:

16 Senator Liz Krueger
Senate Finance Committee (RM)

17

Assemblyman Bob Oaks
18 Assembly Ways & Means Committee (RM)

19 Assemblywoman Catherine T. Nolan
Chair, Assembly Education Committee

20

Senator Carl L. Marcellino
21 Chair, Senate Education Committee

22 Assemblyman Michael Cusick

23 Assemblywoman Deborah J. Glick

24 Assemblyman David G. McDonough

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Elementary & Secondary Education
2 1-27-16

3 PRESENT: (Continued)

4 Assemblyman Clifford W. Crouch
5 Assemblywoman Shelley Mayer
6 Assemblywoman Earlene Hooper
7 Senator Roxanne J. Persaud
8 Assemblyman Edward P. Ra
9 Assemblyman Peter Lopez
10 Senator George S. Latimer
11 Assemblywoman Jo Anne Simon
12 Assemblyman Al Graf
13 Assemblyman Felix W. Ortiz
14 Assemblyman Matthew Titone
15 Senator Velmanette Montgomery
16 Assemblyman Jeffrion L. Aubry
17 Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton
18 Assemblyman Steven Otis
19 Assemblyman Walter T. Mosley
20 Senator Phil Boyle
21 Assemblywoman Rodneyse Bichotte
22 Assemblyman Anthony J. Brindisi
23 Assemblyman Harry B. Bronson
24 Assemblywoman Nicole Malliotakis

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3 PRESENT: (Continued)

4 Assemblywoman Patricia Fahy

5 Senator John DeFrancisco

6 Assemblyman Thomas J. Abinanti

7 Assemblyman Rebecca A. Seawright

8 Senator John Bonacic

9 Assemblyman Carmen E. Arroyo

10 Assemblyman Andrew P. Raia

11 Senator Leroy Comrie

12 Assemblyman William Colton

13 Assemblyman L. Dean Murray

14 Senator Diane Savino

15 Assemblyman David I. Weprin

16 Assemblyman Daniel O'Donnell

17 Senator Michael F. Nozzolio

18 Assemblywoman Alicia Hyndman

19 Assemblyman Marc W. Butler

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1 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Good morning.

2 Today we begin the fourth in the
3 series of hearings conducted by the joint
4 fiscal committees of the Legislature
5 regarding the Governor's proposed budget for
6 fiscal year 2016-2017. The hearings are
7 conducted pursuant to Article 7, Section 3 of
8 the Constitution, and Article 2, Section 31
9 and 32A of the Legislative Law.

10 Today the Assembly Ways and Means
11 Committee and the Senate Finance Committee
12 will hear testimony concerning the budget
13 proposal for elementary and secondary
14 education.

15 I will now introduce the members from
16 the Assembly, and Senator Young, chair of the
17 Senate Finance Committee, will introduce
18 members from the Senate.

19 We've been joined by Assemblyman Jeff
20 Aubry, Assemblyman Harry Bronson, Assemblyman
21 Steve Otis, Assemblyman Anthony Brindisi,
22 Assemblyman Michael Cusick, Assemblywoman
23 Diana Richardson, Assemblyman Walter Mosley,
24 Assemblywoman Shelley Mayer, Assemblywoman

1 Deborah Glick, Assemblywoman Bichotte, and
2 Assemblywoman Carmen Arroyo.

3 And we have Assemblyman Oaks to give
4 us his members.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN OAKS: Thank you. We've
6 joined by Assemblyman Ra, Assemblyman
7 McDonough, Assemblyman Crouch, Assemblyman
8 Graf, and Assemblywoman Malliotakis.

9 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you,
10 Assemblyman.

11 Good morning, everyone. And I'd like
12 to first of all welcome the commissioner and
13 all the legislators to have a healthy
14 discussion today about a topic that is near
15 and dear to the hearts of every legislator in
16 the State of New York, and that's education
17 and our children's future.

18 I'd like to introduce my colleagues
19 who are here today. First, we are joined by
20 Senator Liz Krueger, who's ranking member on
21 the Senate Finance Committee. We're also
22 joined by Senator Marcellino, who is the
23 chair of the Education Committee, and also
24 Senator John Bonacic, and also Senator

1 Roxanne Persaud.

2 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you.

3 Before I introduce the first witness,
4 I would like to remind all of the witnesses
5 testifying today to keep your statement
6 within your allotted time limit so that
7 everyone can be afforded the opportunity to
8 speak. And I speak these words for the
9 people on this dais and in front of us. I
10 would like not to repeat yesterday.

11 First to testify is MaryEllen Elia,
12 commissioner of the New York State Education
13 Department.

14 Good morning.

15 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Good morning.
16 It's a pleasure to be here with all of you.
17 Thank you. Chairwomen Young and Nolan,
18 Chairmen Marcellino and Farrell, and other
19 members of the Senate and Assembly, thank
20 you.

21 I am MaryEllen Elia, and I am the
22 commissioner of education in New York State.
23 I am joined by Senior Deputy Commissioner
24 Jhone Ebert and Executive Deputy Commissioner

1 Beth Berlin.

2 You have my full testimony before you.
3 I will speak to a few slides, and then we'll
4 be happy to address your questions.

5 Because this is my first opportunity
6 to address you during a budget hearing, I
7 want to begin by introducing myself to those
8 of you who don't know me. As some of you
9 know, coming to New York to serve as
10 education commissioner was a homecoming of
11 sorts. I began my career in education as a
12 social studies teacher in the Sweet Home
13 School District outside of Buffalo in 1970,
14 where I was a member of NYSUT. I taught for
15 19 years before moving on to various
16 administrative positions, but I still
17 consider myself a teacher at heart.

18 So if you've done the math, you'll
19 know that I've been in education for over 45
20 years. In that time I've learned a lot about
21 what works and what doesn't. Today I will
22 lay out a roadmap in four key areas for a
23 budget that invests in New York's students
24 and educators.

1 My first priority in this budget is to
2 ensure that our schools are fairly funded
3 through a return of concentrated investments
4 in Foundation Aid and a full restoration of
5 the Gap Elimination Adjustment. By most
6 measures, the economic crisis has lifted and
7 there's no longer a need for the GEA. In
8 December, the Regents gave final approval to
9 a state aid proposal calling for a
10 \$2.4 billion increase in state aid designed
11 to address many of the challenges we face and
12 to provide new opportunities for our
13 teachers' and students' success.

14 On Slides 2 through 4, you will see
15 the highlights of the Regents state proposal,
16 which recommends a \$2.1 billion increase in
17 Operating Aid, which includes \$434 million
18 for a complete GEA restoration, which has
19 unfairly penalized many districts, as well as
20 a \$1.3 billion increase in Foundation Aid,
21 with an additional \$345 million in strategic
22 investments to ensure that school districts
23 can improve teaching and learning.

24 Among these investments, which are

1 highlighted in further detail on Slides 5
2 through 9, we recommend \$125 million this
3 year for expanded access to full-day
4 prekindergarten, \$75 million to support
5 struggling schools in the initial stages of
6 the receivership program, \$75 million to
7 support the unique needs of English language
8 learners, \$45 million to support high quality
9 professional development for our educators,
10 as recommended by the Governor's recent task
11 force report, and \$25 million for start-up
12 programs that support family and community
13 engagement.

14 In addition to those current-year
15 investments, the Regents recommend new
16 reimbursements in next year's budget,
17 highlighted on Slides 10 and 11, supporting
18 the creation of Career and Technical
19 Education pathways and digital learning.

20 My second priority is the creation of
21 a truly universal prekindergarten program
22 detailed on Slides 12 and 13. We know that
23 prekindergarten makes a difference in
24 preparing students for school, and studies

1 indicate that children who participate in
2 high-quality preschool programs are
3 25 percent less likely to drop out of school,
4 40 percent less likely to become a teen
5 parent, 50 percent less likely to be placed
6 in special education, 60 percent more likely
7 to attend some college, and 70 percent less
8 likely to be arrested for a violent crime.

9 The Regents recommend that you build
10 off the historic investments in pre-K by
11 committing \$125 million in this budget to
12 work towards a truly universal program,
13 particularly for upstate, where investments
14 have been limited, and for high-needs
15 students who have the greatest demonstrated
16 need for these early learning opportunities.

17 While we are encouraged by efforts to
18 expand pre-K to 3-year-olds, we should first
19 ensure that all 4-year-olds have a
20 high-quality, full-day pre-K seat before we
21 continue to expand the scope of the program.

22 I also urge you to reject further
23 fragmentation of pre-K. We currently have
24 six different pre-K programs operating under

1 six different sets of requirements, and this
2 budget process proposes a new seventh pre-K
3 program. It's time to make a robust
4 investment and align the existing
5 state-funded pre-K programs into one
6 streamlined system that is allocational, not
7 competitive. Our districts and our kids
8 should not have to compete against each other
9 for programs we know will help all of them
10 succeed.

11 It's also critical that pre-K remain
12 with the State Education Department, not a
13 new board, to ensure programmatic continuity
14 and to put the children in these settings in
15 a better position to achieve a successful and
16 streamlined transition to their early-grades
17 education.

18 My third priority for this budget, as
19 you can see on Slides 14 and 15, is to fight
20 for high-quality, rigorous professional
21 development opportunities for teachers and
22 principals. Let me be clear. Teachers --
23 teachers -- are the key to improving outcomes
24 for students, and the key to helping teachers

1 make a difference for their students is to
2 provide them with professional development
3 opportunities that support continuous
4 improvement.

5 As you know, I was a member of the
6 Governor's Common Core Task Force with
7 Chairman Nolan and also Chairman Marcellino.
8 In our December report, one of our key
9 recommendations was to provide new
10 professional development opportunities.
11 Unfortunately, this recommendation was not
12 funded in the proposed budget. I urge you to
13 provide \$45 million to support professional
14 development for our educators so that the
15 value we place in teachers is reflected in
16 our state's budget.

17 The last priority I'd like to discuss
18 with you is the issue of Pathways to
19 Graduation on Slides 16 through 20. We know
20 that students learn in different ways, and
21 our education system should reflect that
22 diversity rather than a one-size-fits- all
23 approach. The Regents took a historic first
24 step last year by approving the 4+1 Multiple

1 Pathways model which allows all students to
2 substitute one of their social studies
3 Regents exams with approved alternatives.

4 As I have traveled the state, I have
5 consistently heard about the need to expand
6 the Pathway options for all students, but
7 with particular attention to options that
8 would benefit students with disabilities and
9 English language learners. Last month the
10 Regents discussed how we expand Pathway
11 options while retaining rigorous standards.
12 We discussed expansion of the appeals process
13 and the use of project-based assessments.

14 I want to let you and our education
15 stakeholders know that we have heard you and
16 I'll be working with the Regents and the
17 field to develop both short-term and
18 long-term options to better ensure that all
19 students have the opportunity to better
20 demonstrate what they know, particularly
21 students with unique learning needs.

22 Our pathway efforts will require new
23 resources at the state and local level, and
24 we look forward to working with you to make

1 this a reality.

2 Finally, in response to President
3 Obama's "My Brother's Keeper" initiative,
4 Regent Young led a workgroup to study how we
5 can improve outcomes for boys and young men
6 of color who are persistently left behind in
7 our education system. Among the workgroup
8 recommendations were several initiatives,
9 like expansion of the very successful P-TECH
10 model and other exemplary programs to expand
11 opportunities designed to capture and retain
12 these students' interest in their education
13 and keep them in school so that they graduate
14 and can move on to postsecondary education or
15 careers that pay a living wage.

16 Together we can eliminate New York's
17 achievement gaps and make our education
18 system more just and equitable.

19 Before I take your questions, I'd like
20 to close by thanking you for the opportunity
21 to discuss my priorities with you. The
22 testimony I've submitted to you addresses
23 important department budget requests on
24 Slides 21 to 32 that I did not cover but that

1 I would be pleased to discuss with you.

2 I know you have a challenging task
3 ahead of you in the next few weeks to develop
4 a spending plan for the entire state. While
5 there's been a significant focus on economic
6 development and infrastructure in the
7 proposed budget, I'd like to ask you to keep
8 in mind that the investments you make in
9 those areas will mean less for our businesses
10 and our state's future if we fail to make
11 major investments in our workforce pipeline.

12 This is not just me telling you that.
13 Studies indicate -- I was with the business
14 group here in Albany yesterday, talked to
15 them. They are very anxious to be partners
16 with educational institutions around the
17 state. They have a clear understanding and
18 appreciation for the importance of a highly
19 trained workforce in supporting a strong
20 economy.

21 Multiple studies like the ones
22 described on Slide 33 tell us that we have a
23 skills crisis, not a jobs crisis. A 2014
24 study identified 44,000 job openings for

1 middle-skill workers such as computer
2 programmers, yet over 2.6 million New Yorkers
3 age 25 and older did not have the credentials
4 to fill those jobs.

5 Together we can build a workforce
6 pipeline that is the envy of other states.
7 Please invest in our students' success in
8 this budget. Let's together send the message
9 to students, teachers, principals, school
10 leaders, parents and all New Yorkers that our
11 children and our schools are the most
12 important infrastructure of our state.

13 Thank you, and I look forward to our
14 discussion.

15 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you very
16 much, Commissioner.

17 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: I'd like to note
18 that we've been joined by Senator John
19 DeFrancisco.

20 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: First to testify,
21 Chairwoman Nolan.

22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NOLAN: Thank you,
23 Mr. Farrell and my colleagues.

24 First, Commissioner, I cannot thank

1 you enough for a concise presentation. And I
2 appreciate your giving us the slides but not
3 taking us through them one by one, and
4 knowing that people will look at the
5 testimony.

6 I just want to say very publicly what
7 a pleasure it's been to work with you in the
8 short time that you've served as our
9 commissioner. And, you know, your direct and
10 forthright approach I know is going to make a
11 difference in the leadership at State Ed and
12 hopefully in the support that we can give you
13 here in the Legislature. And I want to
14 really endorse the priorities that you put
15 forward today, and hopefully that we can
16 deliver on some of the things that you've
17 asked for.

18 I do want to ask just briefly, though,
19 if you could elaborate a little bit more
20 about community schools. One of the things I
21 struggle with as chair of this committee is
22 education jargon. So we have renewal
23 schools, community schools, struggling
24 schools.

1 We did put \$75 million, and the
2 Governor has certainly initiated another
3 \$100 million this year -- even I am not quite
4 clear as to what the differences are, or the
5 overlap. So maybe you can just take us
6 through that. And I know a lot of our
7 colleagues have asked me to ask you what's
8 happened with the \$75 million from last year.
9 Is it out the door? Is it in the schools?
10 We had a hearing, as you know, on this topic
11 just a few weeks after you started, and we
12 appreciated then your willingness to talk
13 about it. But perhaps you can update
14 everyone as to what's happening in that issue
15 area.

16 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Yes. Thank you.

17 So the funding that came from you last
18 year -- and thank you very much. We
19 appreciate that. I know that the schools
20 across the state, those schools that received
21 the funding who were persistently struggling,
22 those schools have received their funding and
23 they've moved forward. And many of them --
24 in areas that you represent -- are making

1 substantial differences and changes in what's
2 occurring in those schools to support kids.

3 And relative to the community school
4 concept, in fact a number of the schools who
5 have received funding in this past round this
6 year were in fact implementing community
7 schools. As you're well aware, the law calls
8 for an involvement of the community in the
9 development of what will be the key factors
10 that bring change. A community school offers
11 wraparound services for parents and for
12 children and for siblings of children in the
13 schools, to support them. It can range from
14 anything from medical services to
15 psychological services to emotional supports
16 to after-school activities, to expansion of
17 the programming from the regular day into the
18 after-school time, and also provide
19 opportunities that the children in these
20 communities might not have -- so some of
21 those things that would be important for
22 children -- the expansion of art programs,
23 the expansion of athletic programs,
24 after-school.

1 So a community school really supports
2 the community that that school is located in
3 and the children and the families that attend
4 it.

5 As I said, many of the schools that we
6 have that were persistently struggling or
7 struggling have already begun those efforts.
8 And we're seeing that the communities are
9 responding to them. And I would say that
10 New York, in my experience, is very committed
11 to have community support -- that is
12 not-for-profits and actual community groups
13 within our cities and our towns supporting
14 those community schools as they develop.

15 So it's a great idea. We have several
16 that have already started. And we need to
17 work through how that legislation, if we move
18 forward with additional funding, how we would
19 identify that that would go to schools.

20 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NOLAN: Thank you. I
21 know there's a lot of other people who want
22 to ask, and I do get the chance to talk to
23 you pretty regularly, so I just want to say
24 again I wish you well, it was terrific

1 testimony, and we're looking forward to a
2 good discussion today. Thank you.

3 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Thank you very
4 much.

5 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NOLAN: Don't faint,
6 Denny. I'm not taking all my time. I'm
7 happy to let Senator Marcellino and other
8 colleagues ask questions today.

9 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you.

10 At this point I'd like to introduce
11 Senator Carl Marcellino.

12 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: I'd like to
13 introduce Assemblywoman Fahy, Assemblywoman
14 Lifton, Assemblywoman Simon, and Assemblyman
15 Bill Colton.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN OAKS: Also we've been
17 joined by Assemblyman Raia.

18 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NOLAN: I must say you
19 have a full house here today, Commissioner,
20 full house.

21 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Well, thank you
22 for joining us.

23 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Okay, Senator
24 Marcellino.

1 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you very
2 much.

3 Good morning, Commissioner. And --

4 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Good morning.

5 SENATOR MARCELLINO: -- again, thank
6 you for coming. And we hope you will not
7 duplicate yesterday's debacle, if you will.

8 COMMISSIONER ELIA: I thought you all
9 wanted to stay for the day and talk about
10 this important topic.

11 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Only if you'll
12 bring a lunch.

13 (Laughter.)

14 SENATOR MARCELLINO: That might work,
15 but otherwise no.

16 I'm pleased to hear that you consider
17 yourself a teacher at heart still to this
18 day. I also consider myself a teacher. I
19 taught for 20 years, as you well know, at
20 Grover Cleveland High School {inaudible}.
21 Cathy Nolan had the misfortune of being one
22 of my students at the time.

23 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NOLAN: It's hard to
24 believe, isn't it? But true.

1 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Very hard to
2 believe. As my colleague over here said, and
3 that's what happened. But we remain friends
4 to this day.

5 A chart was released by the department
6 that talks about the testing program of
7 required tests for the Common Core. The
8 recommendation -- one of the recommendations
9 from the task force, No. 13, was to reduce
10 the number of days and shorten the duration
11 for standards-aligned state standardized
12 tests.

13 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Right.

14 SENATOR MARCELLINO: This chart has
15 been picked up by a number of --

16 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Senator, your mic's
17 not on.

18 SENATOR MARCELLINO: I'm sorry. This
19 chart -- ooh. You really don't want me to
20 start all over again, do you?

21 (Laughter.)

22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NOLAN: Use your teacher
23 voice, Carl.

24 SENATOR MARCELLINO: I thought I was,

1 but that's okay.

2 This chart proposes to look at -- and
3 it appears, when you look at it, to require
4 the same number of testing days as has been
5 held in the past, which doesn't seem to
6 reduce testing. So some of the people in the
7 opt-out movement are saying: See,
8 Marcellino, when you say give them a chance
9 to do right by us, the first thing they do is
10 they go back and do the same old thing all
11 over again. They're really not trustworthy.

12 Can you explain this chart and how
13 it's going to be operated and how it
14 complies, if it does, with the
15 recommendations of the task force?

16 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Well, you gave me
17 a great opportunity to say publicly I am a
18 trustworthy person. When I say that we're
19 going to do something, we're going to do it.

20 And let me run down the differences in
21 the testing program for this spring so that
22 you clearly understand it. That was part of
23 the discussion in the task force, as you
24 remember, I'm sure, Senator Marcellino and

1 Chairwoman Nolan.

2 So let me talk about that new testing
3 program. We have hired a new company who is
4 doing our testing with us. Questar has been
5 very receptive to the demands that we've made
6 of including teachers across the board in our
7 testing program.

8 And so as was pointed out in the
9 beginning of my testimony, I am from
10 New York. Like many of you, probably, I have
11 a Regents diploma. I then taught in New York
12 for 17 years, and I participated and reviewed
13 assessments in New York as a teacher here.

14 So one of the things that we have to
15 do that we are doing for this spring's
16 assessment is having teachers be involved in
17 reviewing the questions, the match to the
18 standards, and the particular reading
19 passages that are part of that. Every one of
20 the assessments in Grades 3 through 8,
21 language arts and mathematics, has been
22 shortened. Following that, next year, if
23 possible, we will shorten the days.

24 But I want to make it clear to you

1 that if you are going to have enough
2 questions on the test that require students
3 to be able to read and respond and
4 understand, and that we know from their
5 responses that they understand, you will be
6 required to have a certain number of
7 questions. Some of the time limits,
8 particularly for our younger children in
9 Grades 3, 4, and 5, I think we can shorten
10 down in days. We're working very diligently
11 to do that.

12 But understand that this spring there
13 will be major changes. That does not include
14 and I never said it included going to a
15 two-day test as opposed to a three-day test.
16 And I want to point out something to you. If
17 you are in third grade, is it better to have
18 a longer period of time or to have it chunked
19 out to three days for 60 minutes each day?
20 And those are the kinds of questions you have
21 to ask.

22 So those decisions should be made by
23 practitioners, by experts. And one of the
24 things that I am very pleased to say that

1 we've already adjusted for this spring is
2 that if a student is productively working, we
3 have distributed information and will make it
4 very clear to districts that students who are
5 productively working can continue the
6 assessment.

7 I heard from parents across this state
8 and from teachers that part of the stresses
9 that we had on our kids was that they were
10 timed, and particularly younger children. So
11 if they are working productively, then they
12 will be able to continue the assessment and
13 move as -- in a setting where they can read,
14 comprehend and respond to the questions that
15 correspond.

16 So we are making major changes. I've
17 just reviewed them. I have -- in every
18 setting that I've been in over the last seven
19 months in my tenure, I've talked about the
20 changes that we are making for this spring's
21 assessment. And those are major changes,
22 Senator Marcellino, as I'm sure you're aware.

23 SENATOR MARCELLINO: When you talk
24 about the timed tests, are you dealing with

1 special education or students with special
2 needs only, or is that for everybody?

3 COMMISSIONER ELIA: That's for
4 everyone.

5 SENATOR MARCELLINO: So any youngster,
6 no matter what, if they are working
7 productively and the time-limit bell goes
8 off, they will be given time by the proctors
9 to finish their test and do the best they
10 can.

11 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Yes.

12 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Okay. That
13 should clear up some of that.

14 We're still using -- you talk about
15 hiring another company. Questar?

16 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Questar is the new
17 company.

18 SENATOR MARCELLINO: But they don't
19 come in till next year. This year you're
20 still working with the prior company,
21 Pearson, by contract. Am I wrong?

22 COMMISSIONER ELIA: It's a transition
23 time. Pearson is not running the tests,
24 Questar is running the tests for us. But we

1 are using the questions that were developed
2 prior to that with input from New York State
3 teachers this year, prior to the development
4 of the test.

5 SENATOR MARCELLINO: I'm sure you know
6 that much of the complaining and much of the
7 problem posed by a lot of parents and
8 teachers was that the questions in some cases
9 were just incomprehensible. And the required
10 steps and answers were just ridiculous to
11 perform.

12 So what you're telling me -- I just
13 want to be clear on this. If I'm wrong,
14 correct me, please. But what you're saying
15 to the public is that the questions have been
16 reviewed so that they will meet appropriate
17 standards and that they will be
18 age-appropriate for the youngsters who are
19 taking the tests?

20 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Yes. And so let
21 me point out one thing. As you're aware as a
22 teacher, you know that when you give an
23 assessment, if every child could answer every
24 question, then you aren't able to really

1 determine how well students are doing at the
2 high level and what students are struggling
3 some.

4 And so every question that you walk
5 in, every child will not feel like this is
6 the easiest question to answer.

7 However, within the test and the
8 structure of the test, there are multiple
9 levels of difficulty. And we are responding
10 to what is an appropriate response for
11 assessing a student's abilities.

12 SENATOR MARCELLINO: I appreciate
13 that. I just have one more question, if I
14 might.

15 You talked about universal pre-K as
16 being important. You're expanding that to
17 3-year-olds. There are schools throughout
18 the state that don't have full-day
19 kindergarten. Do we have any idea what the
20 number is, by the way, statewide?

21 COMMISSIONER ELIA: There are nine
22 districts across the state that do not have
23 kindergarten. There are approximately -- and
24 I'm saying approximately very purposefully --

1 approximately 20 to 30 that do not have
2 full-day kindergarten.

3 So that is an issue that we are
4 looking at, with the Regents. But the point
5 is, before you in the budget is a proposal to
6 expand pre-K. I read to you the key elements
7 of what occurs when a student has been
8 participating in a quality pre-K program. We
9 should have all children in New York in a
10 quality pre-K program. And we should target
11 4-year-olds first so there is equity and
12 opportunity across the entire state.

13 And certainly it could benefit
14 3-year-olds as well. But I think it's
15 important for us to say that there's
16 consistency across the state and that your
17 zip code does not determine where it is and
18 what age your child can go to pre-K.

19 So my suggestion, my strong
20 recommendation is that we go for a 4-year-old
21 pre-K program statewide for every one of our
22 students. And you're right, we do have to
23 address the issue of those districts that do
24 not have either a kindergarten at all or a

1 full-day kindergarten.

2 SENATOR MARCELLINO: I appreciate
3 that.

4 And I just want to thank you. You
5 testified before the Education Committee of
6 the Senate, and it was a well-received
7 testimony. I personally respect your efforts
8 and have found, working with you and speaking
9 with you, that you are, to my mind, truthful
10 and forthright, and you say what you mean and
11 mean what you say.

12 So thank you very much for your
13 testimony.

14 COMMISSIONER ELIA: And thank you for
15 giving me a chance.

16 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you, Senator.

17 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you, Senator.
18 Assemblyman Cusick.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN CUSICK: Thank you. Thank
20 you, Mr. Chair.

21 Thank you, Commissioner. It's great
22 to see you again. And I want to thank you
23 once again for coming out to Staten Island a
24 couple of weeks ago with Chancellor Farina to

1 St. Charles School to look at the pre-K
2 program that's going on there. I'm just
3 going to follow up -- I know my colleagues
4 have many questions, so I'm going to be as
5 quick as I can and go off the track a little
6 bit on the Common Core questions.

7 But I wanted to ask about the
8 nonpublic schools. We spoke a little bit
9 about it at St. Charles, and you're aware of
10 the challenges that nonpublic schools have
11 when it comes to meeting the requirements of
12 state and federal regulations and the laws
13 that bind them, federally and state.

14 And I know there's a movement and
15 there have been suggestions in reestablishing
16 the Office of Nonpublic Schools. Is there a
17 request on your part for funding for
18 reestablishing that?

19 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Yes. In fact, I
20 have that on one of the slides that we
21 presented to you. We'll find it very
22 quickly.

23 I would concur with you that we have
24 intersections with nonpublic schools in many

1 ways -- through funding that comes in that
2 they're able to access, through programs that
3 we have related to attendance procedures, et
4 cetera. And so I believe that it is to the
5 benefit of certainly the nonpublic schools
6 and the State Education Department that we
7 have a designated office.

8 I want to point out to you that we
9 have -- we are down approximately 40 percent
10 in the staffing in the State Ed Department.
11 And --

12 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NOLAN: Say that number
13 again? Forty percent?

14 COMMISSIONER ELIA: About 40 percent
15 down.

16 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NOLAN: That's a state
17 number?

18 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Right.

19 And if you move to Slide 23, it does a
20 comparison there of the State Ed Department's
21 percentage of funding that comes from the
22 budget, the proposed budget, and our General
23 Fund in the state to State Ed, with a couple
24 other departments compared there.

1 I just want to point out,
2 unfortunately, several years ago that office,
3 because of the constraints that we had in
4 staffing, that office was disbanded.

5 I would agree and support that. And
6 if you see on page 9 of the slides, we are in
7 support that the reestablishment of that
8 office to serve nonpublic schools and to
9 better connect what is occurring with all of
10 education in the State of New York with the
11 nonpublic schools and support them as they
12 receive the funding to really help students
13 across the state.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN CUSICK: Well, thank you
15 for that. And I know that there are many
16 members who have been working on that. I
17 know that Chairwoman Nolan has spearheaded
18 that in our house, in working on that issue.

19 I also just want to ask a question --
20 I've asked this question of many people. But
21 the issue of the heroin epidemic and the
22 opioid epidemic reaches many of our young
23 people throughout the state. And I know in
24 New York City there's a movement in a lot of

1 the local schools to start educating some of
2 our students on the epidemic and the
3 downfalls of heroin and prescription drugs.

4 Is there anything in the planning
5 stages or anything happening on the state
6 level that we can start pushing for in our
7 districts?

8 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Yes. We're very
9 concerned and have had discussions with the
10 staff and with the Regents about this very
11 issue. And we've partnered with other
12 agencies, particularly the Department of
13 Health, to talk about how we might work
14 together to make sure that we get factual
15 information out to our schools.

16 One of the ideas that I have is that
17 we would provide training across our school
18 systems and across our state so that
19 teachers are aware of what resources are
20 available, and that this should be provided
21 as a part of their education in a health
22 program, health setting, or in a science
23 program. That it really is a critical thing
24 for us. It's something that we clearly -- to

1 support students -- that ultimately we want
2 to be successful. It's one of those areas
3 that really we need to help.

4 ASSEMBLYMAN CUSICK: Yes, and I fully
5 agree with that. And it's encouraging to
6 hear you say that. I know on the local level
7 I know that our borough president is working
8 with the local schools and with NYPD to
9 implement this in our local schools. And
10 it's good to hear that we can work with you
11 on the state level on that. Thank you so
12 much.

13 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Thank you.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN CUSICK: Thank you,
15 Mr. Chairman.

16 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you very
17 much.

18 Senator?

19 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: I'd like to note
20 that we've been joined by Senator George
21 Latimer.

22 And next up is Senator John Bonacic.

23 SENATOR BONACIC: Thank you.

24 Good morning, Commissioner. Good to

1 see you. I just would like to preface my
2 remarks before my questions.

3 I have four members of my family that
4 are in the public education system; two are
5 now retired. I have a daughter and a
6 sister-in-law that teach in the public
7 schools. So I hear about education all the
8 time.

9 One of our top priorities this year is
10 to try to get rid of the GEA, and we know
11 that that's a goal of yours. I would ask you
12 to keep your eye on the small city school
13 districts. They have a lot of -- the upstate
14 economy has had a lot of stagnation, urban
15 blight. They need help.

16 I have two basic questions. The first
17 one is I share your enthusiasm and your
18 vision for trying to improve education, but
19 I'm very upset when I read articles about the
20 rubber rooms in New York City. When there's
21 200 to 400 teachers and staffers waiting for
22 disciplinary hearings, costing us between \$15
23 million and \$20 million, I'm going to ask you
24 what you can do to work with whoever you have

1 to to get rid of these rubber rooms. Because
2 it's a disservice to good teachers, it's
3 certainly a black eye to the teachers' union.
4 And it -- it gives like a pall over
5 everything you're talking about to move
6 education forward in empowering students as
7 long as these rubber rooms exist.

8 So I guess my first question is, would
9 you do everything in your power to get rid of
10 these rubber rooms once and for all? That
11 would be Question No. 1. And let me give
12 question No. 2, because I won't talk anymore
13 after I ask you the second question.

14 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Okay.

15 SENATOR BONACIC: The education lobby
16 is coming after us for more money, another
17 over \$2 billion. And as a State Senator, I
18 think I have voted always for the education
19 budget, always given more than what a
20 governor is proposing, regardless of the
21 governor's party. Okay, so we're a believer
22 in education.

23 But when we're spending about \$23,000
24 per student and the national average is about

1 11.5, and we're about in the middle in
2 achievement, do you think there are other
3 things we can do to empower students besides
4 just throwing more money at the education
5 system? I know that's a difficult question.
6 But if you could share some of your thinking
7 about it, I'd appreciate it. And thank you.

8 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Thank you.

9 So let me address the issue of the
10 term "rubber room."

11 SENATOR BONACIC: Yes.

12 COMMISSIONER ELIA: There obviously
13 are processes that are in place if something
14 occurs and a teacher does something that is
15 inappropriate. And I certainly will work
16 with any district and the City of New York so
17 that we can facilitate whatever is possible
18 to make sure that appropriate action is taken
19 as soon as possible and that professionals
20 are treated appropriately, but we move
21 through the process, because ultimately we
22 need to make sure that the people that are in
23 front of our students every day are trained
24 and are appropriate in what they're doing.

1 So that's my statement about that.

2 SENATOR BONACIC: Thank you.

3 COMMISSIONER ELIA: And I am very,
4 very supportive of constant improvement for
5 teachers. And you saw in my proposal and my
6 discussion that I believe it's extremely
7 important that we have professional
8 development for teachers across the state,
9 that it should be equitable across the state,
10 that we shouldn't have competition for who's
11 going to get the funding to be able to do the
12 kind of training that our teachers need. And
13 I believe that the training of teachers
14 ultimately puts them in a position to be
15 better in the classroom, and I would
16 anticipate that some of the situations that
17 we face across the state in teachers doing
18 things inappropriately hopefully would end.
19 At least decrease.

20 So I am very concerned about it, but I
21 think one of the ways to address it is that
22 we make sure that we provide every bit of
23 training that is possible for our teachers so
24 they can be competent in the classroom doing

1 the things they need to do.

2 The second issue on -- and you're
3 right, it's not an easy thing, is it?

4 SENATOR BONACIC: No.

5 COMMISSIONER ELIA: You have funded
6 schools -- and you're correct, New York has
7 funded schools in a way that has been
8 supportive of the kinds of things that need
9 to occur to bring students success.

10 We are in a shift across this country
11 in raising standards and in moving, actually,
12 from one system of education to a very
13 different approach to how we connect with
14 kids, how we teach kids, and how teachers use
15 the resources that they have to interact with
16 kids.

17 So let me give you a good example. In
18 New York we have the P-TECH system. We have
19 schools, approximately 25, and we've added
20 seven or eight this year, so even more P-TECH
21 centers. P-TECH centers are taking students
22 that you would anticipate would not be
23 successful and graduate, and they're moving
24 them through a system -- high interest, very,

1 very relevant because they in fact are
2 connecting with jobs and with companies who
3 will give them jobs and then give them
4 experiences in that setting so that they can
5 get better every day.

6 So the students moving through a
7 P-TECH program are students that are at-risk
8 kids in our schools. A number of them are
9 students with special needs. They are
10 students who in our traditional sense
11 probably wouldn't make it if we let them in a
12 more traditional setting. But when we take
13 them and put them in a setting that is
14 designed around a different approach, it
15 works.

16 So I would suggest to you that we have
17 to move New York State and the teachers of
18 New York State -- which I again get back to,
19 the critical piece of having staff
20 development for teachers -- we have to move
21 the state so that we are reflective of the
22 kinds of jobs that are necessary -- all of
23 them require -- for the most part, they
24 require postsecondary work.

1 You talk about infrastructure, you
2 talk about building roads, you talk about
3 bridges, you talk about expansion of
4 buildings. People now going into the trades
5 are required to have additional training.
6 And we want people to be able -- our students
7 to be successful when they get in that
8 setting and they have an opportunity for a
9 great job. And the way to do that is to
10 provide the training that is reflective of
11 the jobs that are out there in this
12 21st-century technology world we live in,
13 where it isn't what you know, it's if you
14 know how to find out what you don't know.

15 And I think that's a critical piece
16 and it responds to your point. But to do
17 that, that transition, is expensive. It does
18 take resources, and it takes people that can
19 think differently about how we're going to
20 respond to kids.

21 SENATOR BONACIC: Thank you very much,
22 Commissioner.

23 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you.

1 Assemblyman Ra.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you, Chairman.

3 Good morning, Commissioner.

4 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Good morning.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: I just wanted to ask
6 you a couple of quick questions about some of
7 the policy issues that, you know, were put
8 forth. Let me tell you it's very refreshing
9 to be talking this year about funding various
10 things instead of about policy issues, which
11 dominated a lot of the conversation last
12 year.

13 But I am curious with, you know, the
14 Governor putting forth his proposal, he
15 seemed to really put the onus completely on
16 the State Education Department to enact those
17 recommendations from the Common Core Task
18 Force. I was just wondering what your
19 thoughts are in terms of whether you think
20 there is anything we need to do legislatively
21 to empower the department to enact some of
22 those recommendations.

23 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Well, so if we
24 walk through the recommendations, and there's

1 needs to be done in a way that we can get
2 input from the public in multiple ways and
3 use that input to make recommendations back
4 to the Regents for what the standards for New
5 York State students should be.

6 We agree they need to be high
7 standards. It is a normal thing to review
8 standards every few years. You have put in
9 legislation that they'll be reviewed after
10 every five years; I think that's appropriate.
11 And it takes time, it takes effort, and it
12 takes people to work to make sure that a
13 process like that can be done appropriately.

14 There is no funding in here for any of
15 that. So that's one area that I think is --
16 that needs to be addressed.

17 Secondly, I would suggest to you, and
18 it was brought up a number of times in the
19 testimony that we heard from across the
20 state, from parents and stakeholders -- and
21 Senator Marcellino and Assemblywoman Nolan,
22 as chairs of their committee, were part of
23 our group. And as we talked about it, it was
24 clear: We have to support our teachers. In

1 fact, on one of the slides in your deck we
2 point out that one of the specific examples
3 of work to be done is helping teachers,
4 giving them staff development, helping them
5 understand the standards, how to teach the
6 standards, and then supporting them in
7 developing lesson plans that are related to
8 the delivery of those standards.

9 We have a resource that's been used in
10 New York over the last several years called
11 Engage New York. It's an online opportunity
12 for teachers to get information. It needs to
13 be worked on.

14 But key to this is the staff
15 development piece that was suggested as one
16 of the key recommendations from the
17 Governor's task force. It was recommendation
18 No. 9 and specifically speaks to across the
19 board. It can't be a program where a
20 district that has a great grant writer can
21 get. Because the districts that don't have
22 the great grant writers have teachers and
23 kids that need to have the support.

24 So we need to have funding for staff

1 development that is consistent for every
2 teacher across the state, and we need to
3 develop a career ladder so that every school
4 has a master teacher that can support and
5 help continuous, ongoing improvement in our
6 schools.

7 We had a model that was used that
8 previously had been funded through our Race
9 to the Top grant. That funding is gone. But
10 it was consistently -- and all the people
11 that I've talked to have indicated that the
12 STLE, the Strengthening Teacher Leader
13 Effectiveness model, was very effective. But
14 everybody didn't get it. And so you have
15 pockets in some of the most needy school
16 districts and urban districts where we didn't
17 have that support for teachers. And that
18 will make a huge change when we see things
19 changing every day in every classroom across
20 this state.

21 So there are other things that were
22 also brought up. The issue of the testing.
23 We need to think of different ways to test
24 our children. We need to put in

1 project-based assessments. Project-based
2 assessments cost money. You have to develop
3 them with the teachers of New York. You have
4 to then put the teachers in place so that
5 they can be supportive of the students who
6 opt to do a project-based assessment. And
7 then after you've done that, you have to have
8 trained reviewers who will look at each of
9 those with the appropriate rubric and
10 consistently assess them across the state.

11 So all of that is taking resources.
12 And that was called for in the report, and it
13 was not funded.

14 So I think it's important for us to
15 understand we all want what's right for our
16 kids. We all want a state that can be proud
17 of what they do for their children but also
18 can be a strong state in terms of developing
19 its workforce and all of the things that are
20 necessary for success. And if you follow --
21 and I was so pleased to be part of a very
22 productive workforce group that put together
23 these recommendations. If you follow the
24 recommendations and support us to make these

1 things happen, we will do them.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Just getting slightly
3 more specific. So teacher evaluations, we
4 know the action was taken to delay the use of
5 the scores in the evaluations. But at least
6 in my view, as that provision in statute
7 currently stands, I find it very limiting.
8 And I'm hearing from some of my
9 superintendents, you know, concerns on -- I
10 think that was the major piece in terms of
11 general public concern on the testing side.
12 But then it kind of I think leaves the rest
13 of it for the districts to work through and
14 figure out how the assessment piece is going
15 to work on top of, you know, things like the
16 outside evaluators and things of that nature.

17 So do you view, from the department,
18 that the Legislature needs to make any
19 further changes to the teacher evaluation as
20 in current statute?

21 COMMISSIONER ELIA: So there's no
22 question that we have to look at what the
23 evaluation process -- the process is and then
24 how it's constructed and how it's connected

1 to performance of students and how we do
2 that. There's no question that has to occur.

3 Right now what we've done is we have
4 stepped back, and by putting in place this
5 transition period until the 2019-2020 school
6 year, we have much to do. We have work to do
7 on the standards, we have work to do on staff
8 development and curriculum. All of those
9 things were part of the commission. We have
10 work to do relative to the assessments. And
11 again, teachers need to be very involved in
12 that.

13 And we need -- as we're moving
14 forward, we need to put together a team of
15 people from all of our practitioner groups
16 and our parent groups to talk about what is
17 an appropriate way to have an accountability
18 system in the State of New York.

19 So in New York we invest over
20 \$60 billion a year in education. You support
21 that. If you want to have a great system and
22 you want to get better and you want to
23 provide what students need, we need to figure
24 out a way that we can all know that we are

1 accountable for that investment and that
2 we're doing what needs to be done for all
3 kids across the state.

4 So we need to do an evaluation system,
5 not just for teachers, for principals and,
6 across the state, for our districts. But it
7 doesn't happen overnight, and it does require
8 input, and it needs to look at how we're
9 progressing in those areas that are related
10 to it -- like the standards development, like
11 the assessments, like the work with
12 teachers -- so that when we have that
13 evaluation in place, it is fair and
14 appropriate and it talks about the importance
15 of helping teachers get better with
16 continuous improvement every day.

17 No evaluation should be trying to
18 skewer people. It shouldn't be. And
19 unfortunately, I think the rhetoric has gone
20 in that direction and I think we have to
21 shift that immediately.

22 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you,
23 Commissioner.

24 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you very

1 much.

2 We've been joined by Assemblyman
3 Weprin. Senator?

4 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you very
5 much, Chairman.

6 Next would be Senator John
7 DeFrancisco.

8 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Thank you,
9 Commissioner. And thank you for meeting with
10 me earlier this year on what I'm going to
11 talk about now, my pet project. And we keep
12 bringing it up every year, and hopefully
13 we're getting closer at this point in time.

14 And that basically is we pay for
15 remediation of students, they get high school
16 degrees that the amount of remediation is
17 absolutely unbelievable. And when we have
18 this discussion, it's always, well, the urban
19 schools, people have different problems,
20 different issues, poverty, et cetera, et
21 cetera.

22 I was so pleased when I saw an
23 editorial from Newsday -- which doesn't
24 normally happen -- but what I was pleased

1 about was that the high school graduation
2 rate on Long Island -- Long Island, \$22,000 a
3 year average for each student, the Long
4 Island everyone complains about that gets too
5 much state aid except the Long Islanders --
6 the graduation rate was 89 percent, but only
7 54 percent of students got scores on their
8 Regents algebra and English exams that
9 indicate college readiness. Long Island.

10 I know there's some better schools on
11 Long Island, some schools that aren't so
12 good. In Roosevelt the graduation rate in
13 2015 was 72 percent. College preparedness,
14 3.3 percent. And the most noted high schools
15 that are outstanding high schools, at least
16 90 percent did head off to college. About 70
17 percent of the community college students and
18 50 percent of the four-year college students
19 in the state paid for remedial college
20 classes, to retake classes graduates didn't
21 master in high school.

22 And what I've been trying to do, and
23 we've talked about it, is try to get some
24 consensus between SUNY and CUNY and the

1 commissioner of education and members of the
2 Regents Board, a way to identify these
3 students earlier. And rather than in the
4 senior year -- and everybody knows it
5 happens -- if you've got your required
6 courses you're either in some type of study
7 hall or you are allowed to go off to some
8 phony baloney job that's supposed to prepare
9 you for life.

10 So I guess what I'm saying is I wanted
11 to let everybody know that we've already had
12 a meeting with the commissioner and the
13 chancellors of CUNY and SUNY and we're hoping
14 to come up with some type of solution.

15 But is there any brief comment you
16 would like to make? And then I will go on to
17 my next actual question.

18 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Well, I appreciate
19 your involvement in this and your support for
20 it, because I do believe that we have a
21 responsibility, when a student has a diploma
22 from one of the high schools in New York
23 State, that they shouldn't automatically have
24 to go and take -- over 40 percent of them go

1 and have to have remediation before they can
2 take regular courses that matriculate to a
3 degree, whether it's an associate's degree or
4 whether it's a four-year baccalaureate
5 degree.

6 So we have to stop that. And I've
7 started having conversations early in my
8 tenure with Dr. Zimpher and also working with
9 CUNY. We believe that we can put in place an
10 assessment that can be done in 10th grade
11 that would allow us to know what areas
12 particularly a student needed to have and
13 then provide that intervention in high school
14 prior to a student graduating.

15 And as you're aware, our conversation
16 was that this would be something that should
17 be done for every student that wants it, but
18 that it could be an optional thing. But I
19 will tell you, parents need to understand
20 that we have a responsibility, as do they, in
21 helping us to get their student where they
22 need to be. And I would agree with you that
23 if you look at the schedules I believe across
24 the state, we could make sure that our

1 students, many, many more of them were ready
2 to go into college level coursework when they
3 walked out of high school. If we all agree,
4 from CUNY, SUNY and the independent colleges
5 and the State Ed Department, we can make that
6 happen.

7 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: And if the
8 parents learn about this and learn that
9 they're going to save money and their TAP
10 grants aren't just going to get prepared for
11 college while they're in college, I think
12 parents would buy into it. And we as a state
13 should make an investment to make sure it
14 happens.

15 The other thing that a lot of -- I
16 started -- my first elected office was the
17 school board of the City of Syracuse. That
18 was 112 years ago.

19 (Laughter.)

20 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Actually, 38.
21 And what seems to be happening more and more
22 is that there is an atmosphere in the
23 classroom that is, to put it mildly, not
24 conducive to learning. And that applies

1 across the board in varying degrees to all
2 type of school districts. And I really
3 believe much of this stuff could be worked
4 out by teachers teaching as long as they've
5 got an atmosphere in which to teach.

6 We have violence in the city schools
7 that -- you know, teachers come to me all the
8 time: I got struck, I got hit, the kid
9 doesn't get suspended and he's back in my
10 classroom or somebody else's next week, and
11 there's no consequences.

12 Now, I don't know if there's any
13 statewide policy on that, but recently the
14 Syracuse City School District was taken to
15 task by our Attorney General, who indicated
16 that there was some type of racial bias as to
17 the number of suspensions. And they came up
18 together, Schneiderman with his education
19 expertise, and the city school district, what
20 the suspension procedure should be. Which
21 resulted in there's -- nobody gets suspended
22 any more. Okay? Very rarely. And you talk
23 to any teacher in the school, and the
24 atmosphere is getting worse.

1 So my question is, is there any
2 statewide policy -- rather than the Attorney
3 General moving into the realm of education --
4 where certain standards have to be met and
5 certain things can happen if someone is
6 breaking those rules with respect to how they
7 should act in a classroom so there's a good
8 atmosphere?

9 COMMISSIONER ELIA: So I think your
10 question actually has a number of different
11 areas I'd like to address.

12 First of all, our Safe Schools Task
13 Force was made up of people from a number of
14 different agencies, and we looked
15 specifically at what we could do to support
16 the whole concept of the climate of a school
17 being better and conducive to an educational
18 learning environment.

19 You know, it's easy to say that, but
20 to really get there you really have to do,
21 and I'm going to go back to again, you have
22 to do training across the board for teachers
23 and administrators. And I want to connect
24 that to another proposal that we have, which

1 is to establish an Office of Community and
2 Parent Involvement. We do not have a focused
3 office on that, and much of what you've said
4 connects to what happens with parents and
5 students in the classroom in that school.

6 So I think it's very important that we
7 help and support schools across the state to
8 have a respectful environment for students.

9 One of the things that I do know, if
10 students aren't in school, they cannot learn.
11 If students aren't in school, they can't
12 learn. It makes sense, but we have to often
13 say that to ourselves. And there are a
14 number of models that have been used to
15 address the issue that you're talking about,
16 which is what is it you can do when a student
17 is misbehaving that doesn't automatically
18 have them exiting the school building, but
19 rather doing other things. And there are
20 many models that have been very successful.

21 And part of the work that needs to be
22 done I believe in New York is finding those
23 excellent pockets of great work and sharing
24 that with others. And the strategies that

1 are used in school sites that have particular
2 engagement of their students with their
3 teachers, who have a relevant kind of
4 curriculum where teachers are using the kinds
5 of strategies in the classroom that get kids
6 involved in it in a way that they have
7 positive interactions with each other in a
8 respectful way, that creates that kind of
9 environment.

10 And we are expanding to a school
11 climate index. We believe that that's a
12 really critical way of knowing how well
13 students are interacting in that school. If
14 the climate is a hot climate and it's not one
15 that -- and I don't mean, you know, a hot
16 place, I'm talking about a hot climate where
17 people are just ready to go after each
18 other -- then that is not conducive to a good
19 educational environment.

20 So we are instituting as part of our
21 Safe Schools work a climate survey for
22 schools so that we know and they know what
23 they need to address to create that kind of
24 learning environment that is conducive to an

1 education.

2 SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Thank you.

3 COMMISSIONER ELIA: You're welcome.

4 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you.

5 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you.

6 I'd like to note that we've been
7 joined by Senator Leroy Comrie.

8 ASSEMBLYMAN OAKS: We've also been
9 joined by Assemblyman Murray and Assemblyman
10 Lopez.

11 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you.

12 Assemblyman Mosley.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN MOSLEY: Thank you,
14 Mr. Chair.

15 First and foremost, I'd like to thank
16 the commissioner for all the work you've done
17 in such a short period of time. It was a
18 pleasure to have been working with you.

19 I'd also like to thank the Board of
20 Regents as it relates to the My Brother's
21 Keeper initiative.

22 The question that I have, first and
23 foremost -- one, not a question -- as a
24 parent of a third grader, my son, who always

1 tells me, Dad, I've got Sunday school, I have
2 regular school, I have Saturday school, when
3 do I ever get a chance to get out of school?
4 To him, I think it will be refreshing to let
5 him know that the testing, the rigors of the
6 testing that he anticipates taking this year
7 and in subsequent years ahead of him, will be
8 a little bit less. So I have some good news
9 to bring back home to Brooklyn.

10 But as relates to the My Brother's
11 Keeper initiative -- and I guess it falls in
12 line with what was said earlier in regards to
13 the 40 percent reduced SED staffing. When it
14 comes to the recommendations that were made
15 by Regent Young and the panel, who I'm
16 thankful for all their work in allowing me to
17 be a part of that, along with some of my
18 colleagues here, the \$52 million that was
19 attached to those recommendations, if we
20 don't get the full 52 million, how would you
21 prioritize what would be the most significant
22 recommendations that need to be funded in
23 order for us to carry on and making sure that
24 all that work that was done was not in vain?

1 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Well, as you
2 pointed out, there were a number of
3 initiatives in there. I think one of the key
4 things, and I've had this conversation with
5 Regent Young, one of the key things is to
6 establish that Office of Community and Parent
7 Involvement. That will help us to then work
8 individually in those particular districts
9 that we know could use a lot of support in
10 this area, and develop those kind of
11 connections that ultimately gets back to the
12 concept of community schools that we earlier
13 talked of in response to Chair Nolan's
14 question.

15 Because the parenting community
16 involvement is occurring in some places
17 really, really well. And we've got to use
18 those as models, get that word out and help
19 districts who are struggling with that to be
20 able to connect better with their families.
21 So I would say that was one of the first ones
22 that was particularly important.

23 There was also a concept in here to
24 look at what are those strategies that we can

1 influence districts to put in place to
2 support an opportunity for college -- from
3 cradle to college and really work in
4 connecting what happens in pre-K through
5 kindergarten, through the first five years,
6 into middle school and into high school, and
7 connecting students. The way that you make
8 sure that every kid is successful is you know
9 who they are, you know the issues that
10 they're facing, and you work to support them.

11 Regent Young put together some great
12 panels. A number of you were there, and you
13 saw and heard students talking about what
14 made a difference in their life. And the
15 biggest thing that I came away from there
16 with was the students themselves needed to
17 feel connected to people in their environment
18 who cared about them.

19 And one of the things that was in the
20 proposal was to incentivize school districts
21 to move forward on this My Brother's Keeper
22 challenge and implement this cradle-to-career
23 strategy aimed at improving those outcomes
24 for boys and men of color. And we would do

1 an RFP, put funding out there, and then have
2 the Community and Parent Engagement Office
3 work closely with those districts to support
4 those programs.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN MOSLEY: Okay. My
6 follow-up question, then, is given the lack
7 of staffing at SED, would that have an
8 influence in terms of what would be a
9 priority if we were to be fully funded? So
10 how much of the resources that would be
11 allocated -- if we were to be fully funded to
12 \$52 million -- would be allocated towards
13 making up for the lack of personnel at SED,
14 and how much would not be required to deal
15 with that 40 percent lag in SED staffing?

16 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Well, so if you're
17 talking about establishing that office, that
18 would come obviously through this agenda,
19 right? We talked about the development of
20 exemplary school models and practices that
21 are supportive of cultural diversity, and
22 that would be one.

23 The other one that I talked about was
24 to incentivize school districts in their

1 work. And one that was particularly
2 supportive is the Teacher Opportunity
3 Corridor to fund programs for the expansion
4 of our -- of working to get minority teachers
5 into our classrooms. This is a national
6 crisis. We certainly are affected by it in
7 New York State. And it is really a critical
8 thing as a way to support our students who
9 are in our schools, but then support the
10 future of our schools to make sure that we
11 have teachers that are there that are from
12 the communities and working with our
13 students.

14 So to get to your question, I think
15 that what we would do is we would prioritize
16 this as an agenda, clearly the Regents have
17 identified that as an important agenda, and
18 included it in their recommendations for this
19 group.

20 ASSEMBLYMAN MOSLEY: Well, thank you,
21 Commissioner. As a former teacher and
22 someone who taught under Dr. Lester Young as
23 my district manager, I want to thank you
24 again for what you're doing for young boys

1 and young men of color throughout New York
2 State.

3 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you.

5 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you.

6 I'd like to note that we've been
7 joined by Senator Velmanette Montgomery.

8 And our next speaker is Senator George
9 Latimer.

10 SENATOR LATIMER: Thank you very much,
11 Madam Chair.

12 Commissioner, good to see you this
13 morning. Hopefully not into the afternoon,
14 but that's been known to happen here.

15 I have a couple of questions on the
16 universal pre-K proposals that the executive
17 branch has put out, and to get your sense and
18 the sense of the department of the Board of
19 Regents.

20 The Governor's proposal sets a
21 precedent by staffing the prekindergarten
22 board with staff from the Office of Children
23 and Family Services, which is a departure
24 from what we would have expected, which is

1 that the State Education Department would
2 provide that type of backup staffing. And
3 tied into that, the \$28 million with the
4 competitive grant program is to be decided by
5 a board that's made up of the Governor and
6 the majority legislative leaders.

7 What is the sense that you have as to
8 whether this departure is wise? How does
9 that position the State Education Department
10 in both of these two areas, both how the
11 board is supported and how the grants are to
12 be allocated?

13 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Well, I appreciate
14 that question.

15 I'm very concerned about anything that
16 would pull apart or complicate and make more
17 siloed decisions about anything related to
18 education, but particularly pre-K. And let
19 me expound on that a bit.

20 So you are putting in a pre-K program,
21 you currently have six. This is a projection
22 and a possibility of the seventh going and
23 being funded. All six have different
24 requirements. So if you're thinking that you

1 have a consistent pre-K program across the
2 State of New York, you don't.

3 Pre-K, the whole purpose of a pre-K
4 program is to connect students to what they
5 will face in kindergarten. And if in fact a
6 board that is not associated with the State
7 Ed Department would be making decisions about
8 grant money, about what's going to be done in
9 those programs, how it would be connected, it
10 just doesn't make sense.

11 If you put a program in place and it's
12 connected, the purpose of the pre-K, which
13 we're trying to make sure that it is
14 connected in every school district and in
15 every school, whether it's done in a
16 community-based setting or a school district
17 setting, that it's connected to kindergarten.
18 That teachers from pre-K talk to the teachers
19 in kindergarten, that there is a smooth
20 transition for children. And if you have a
21 separate board, you are working against that
22 goal.

23 SENATOR LATIMER: If I may, just one
24 other question, Madam Chair. A different

1 direction, overall picture.

2 The Board of Regents advocated for
3 \$2.1 billion in education spending this year.
4 The Executive Budget has \$991 million. The
5 Board of Regents called for, of that \$2.1
6 billion, full restoration of the GEA, which
7 is a position that's taken by the tripartisan
8 members of the Senate and many members of the
9 Assembly as well, and also adds significantly
10 to the Foundation Aid, significantly over
11 what's in the Executive Budget.

12 We are living under a tax cap world.
13 If we do not add significantly in those
14 areas, what do you think the realistic
15 expectation will be of how districts will be
16 able to meet the various goals that we've set
17 before them?

18 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Well, obviously
19 I'm very concerned about it, and I've had
20 conversations with a number of the groups
21 that represent the parent groups, the PTAs,
22 the superintendents, the teacher groups, and
23 the school board groups. And when you talk
24 individually to superintendents, they are

1 very aware of exactly what that means. And
2 also I'm sure you've seen a number of the
3 articles that when you have a 0.12 increase
4 and that's going to bring you approximately a
5 \$60,000 increase and you know that your
6 benefit increase is even more than that,
7 you're already starting behind. And then
8 we're saying that we need to do much more to
9 bring success to our kids.

10 So I'm very concerned about the
11 Foundation Aid and think that it is
12 absolutely a critical expenditure, and
13 understand that we need to make sure that the
14 best and the most important asset that we
15 have in developing a strong state is our
16 children and the education system in
17 preparing our kids for what they're going to
18 do when they walk out of high school. And
19 we're not doing that as well as we need to,
20 and I believe that those investments are
21 critical.

22 SENATOR LATIMER: Thank you,
23 Commissioner. Thank you, Madam chair.

24 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you, Senator.

1 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you very
2 much.

3 Assemblyman Graf.

4 ASSEMBLYMAN GRAF: Hi, Commissioner.
5 How are you?

6 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Hi, there.

7 ASSEMBLYMAN GRAF: I have so many
8 questions. And the good news is I'm limited
9 to 10 minutes. The good news for me is
10 you're not limited. So I'm going to go
11 through a whole bunch of concerns that I
12 have, and hopefully you can address them.

13 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Well, let me write
14 them down as you go.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN GRAF: So we've already
16 established that we're going to be using the
17 Pearson tests again, but you're going to
18 modify them.

19 COMMISSIONER ELIA: This is muffled.
20 I'm not quite sure --

21 ASSEMBLYMAN GRAF: The Pearson tests,
22 we're going to be using them, but you're
23 going to modify them.

24 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Yes.

1 ASSEMBLYMAN GRAF: Okay. One of the
2 big problems with the Pearson tests were they
3 disregarded IEPs. So when you have students
4 with learning disabilities, we may do guided
5 learning, and they weren't able to do that.
6 So that was a big concern throughout the
7 state.

8 The other thing is the developmental
9 appropriateness and also the age
10 appropriateness of a lot of the tests. And I
11 was hearing that if a kid was chronologically
12 in fifth grade, okay, but developmentally in
13 first grade, they were trying to test them at
14 a higher level. And the answer the state
15 gave was we'll give them more time to take
16 the test. So that's a concern that I have
17 with the testing.

18 The other thing with the testing is
19 we're not counting it against the teachers,
20 we're not counting it against the students,
21 okay. Why give the test? And are the tests'
22 sole purpose to examine whether or not you're
23 going to put the schools into receivership?
24 Okay, is that what we're using the tests for?

1 Because they're not counting it to children,
2 not counting it to students.

3 The other thing is I want to make sure
4 there's not going to be any punishment,
5 because I predict we're going to have a big
6 opt-out movement this year, okay, and I don't
7 want to see schools punished because parents
8 decide to opt out their children.

9 Another area of concern is the cap.
10 I'm being told it's not a true 2 percent cap.
11 And some schools are telling me they may have
12 a zero percent cap this year, and they're not
13 going to be able to do that. What do we need
14 to look at there? Right?

15 Pre-K, kindergarten. I mean, it's
16 known that you can have pre-K but if you
17 don't continue with kindergarten, all right,
18 there's no benefit. And many of our schools
19 in the suburban areas -- I know of schools,
20 one of my school districts actually has a
21 lottery for kindergarten. So what happens is
22 some kids will go into kindergarten, and
23 other schools the parents have to pay out of
24 their pockets to the school district in order

1 for their child to go to kindergarten. What
2 are we doing about that?

3 One other thing is some schools wrote
4 their own curriculum to comply with the
5 standards and are very happy with the
6 curriculum. Why aren't we looking at
7 reimbursing those school districts for the
8 money they laid out, have them submit it to
9 the state, and if the state adopts their
10 curriculum, they reimburse the school
11 districts for the expense of creating the
12 curriculum? That would give us home-grown
13 curriculum written by our teachers, which are
14 the some of the best teachers in the country.
15 Why keep buying it off companies when we're
16 seeing curricula that's horrific?

17 Diplomas. We keep giving fancy names
18 to diplomas. And these kids can't even get
19 in the service with the diplomas that we're
20 trying to give them. When I went to school,
21 we had a Regents diploma and a general
22 diploma, we had an education track and a
23 career track. There's nothing wrong with
24 being an electrician or a plumber. They make

1 more money than a lot of lawyers that I know
2 that came out of school. Okay?

3 So I just think that once the
4 government intruded, every level of
5 government intruded into education, they
6 screwed it all up. We've got to get
7 government out of our classrooms and let
8 teachers teach.

9 Now, the curriculum that we've had has
10 been so structured that teachers basically
11 are teaching to the middle of the class, and
12 that's it. And they're passing these kids
13 by. When I was taught to teach, you talked
14 to the middle of the class, you gave seat
15 work to reinforce what you taught, you gave
16 the kids that were a little advanced a little
17 harder work to do -- not to punish them, but
18 to keep them engaged. But that gave us an
19 opportunity to get to the children that
20 didn't get the concept and explain it in a
21 different way.

22 The way our curriculum is now, they
23 don't have the opportunity to do that.
24 They're leaving these kids by the wayside.

1 So it's not going to be better, it's going to
2 be worse. What are you doing to address
3 that?

4 Plus with the structure the way it is
5 with heroin, what I've heard out there is in
6 the lower grades you have resource officers,
7 but once you get to the middle school and you
8 get to the high school, you want to do
9 peer-to-peer stuff. But the structure of the
10 curriculum doesn't allow for that, and that's
11 been cut out of our schools. And that's a
12 big concern out there throughout the state.

13 I think I've pretty much hit
14 everything. I know if I think about it, I'll
15 hit a few more things.

16 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Maybe we ought to
17 set up an appointment.

18 (Laughter.)

19 COMMISSIONER ELIA: But we can
20 specifically -- I'm going to try to get
21 through several of these --

22 ASSEMBLYMAN GRAF: Yeah, but if you
23 can go through this -- well, you have no time
24 limit. It's me that has the time limit. So

1 I'll try to check them off as you go. And if
2 you miss one, I'll let you know.

3 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Okay, let's see if
4 I wrote fast enough. And so you mentioned
5 the Pearson test. You're absolutely
6 accurate, we have the Pearson tests, we're
7 transitioning. There is much more
8 involvement of teachers in the development of
9 the test for this spring. They're reviewing
10 -- as I said earlier, they're reviewing the
11 passages and they're reviewing the questions
12 and we are shortening up each of the tests
13 from Grades 3 through 8 in both language arts
14 and mathematics.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN GRAF: The IEPs? Are we
16 ignoring them? Because we were ignoring
17 them.

18 COMMISSIONER ELIA: So as you're
19 aware, the federal government requires that
20 students who have an IEP and are
21 students with special needs, they must take
22 the same test. That is something that we
23 have requested waivers on that. We have not
24 received them in New York. However, now with

1 the new ESSA law, we anticipate that we will
2 have some flexibility and opportunity. And
3 as we move towards computer-based testing, it
4 will allow us to have the students start the
5 test and then drop to the level that's
6 appropriate for them to function better.

7 So we anticipate that that's going to
8 help us, but it will be a while. And we
9 still are requesting, as we move into this
10 new era with the new federal law, that we
11 would be able to, as a state -- there's a
12 plan to have seven states receive a grant to
13 try some more creative approaches to
14 assessment, and we're hoping that we can be
15 one of those states in New York and that we
16 can then use that opportunity to develop
17 different assessments for our students with
18 IEPs.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN GRAF: Okay. Cap?

20 COMMISSIONER ELIA: The issue of the
21 age appropriateness of students, it has been
22 an issue. As I traveled around the state, I
23 heard that a lot, that there are students
24 that in kindergarten, in first grade, second

1 grade, they feel like the standards are too
2 stretching for them. And we are going to be
3 reviewing all the standards.

4 The most feedback we got for both
5 English language arts and mathematics was in
6 the early grades from kindergarten to Grade 4
7 and then kindergarten to Grade 3. So it will
8 be an area that's going to get much
9 attention.

10 On the career track, we do have in the
11 State of New York the opportunity for a local
12 diploma. We presented that two weeks ago to
13 our Regents. They were -- some of them
14 weren't as familiar with it. However, it is
15 in place and we do have that as an
16 availability for students.

17 However, we also have a CDOS
18 credential that comes -- and we're expanding
19 that to be part of our options, our Pathway
20 options, so that students can learn the ways
21 of work, et cetera -- those soft skills,
22 what's necessary to be a good employee -- and
23 also have opportunities to go out in the
24 field with a particular career in mind.

1 So those are all options that we're
2 expanding. And the whole concept of Pathways
3 for Graduation opens up lots of
4 opportunities. You still need to keep it
5 rigorous so that it means something to have a
6 diploma from New York State schools, but it
7 also -- it can, within that context, it can
8 also be something that's very relevant for
9 students and prepares them for either taking
10 a certification test, which is -- when you
11 said that you had been in a program earlier
12 or you knew about programs at the time that
13 you were in school, we used to have that as a
14 technology or another opportunity for kids to
15 go out immediately into a career.

16 Now we have -- we are expanding those,
17 and right now we have 14 certification tests
18 that can be part of the 4+1 Graduation
19 Pathways, and we're expanding it up. As we
20 see the tests, we're expanding it to include
21 those tests.

22 ASSEMBLYMAN GRAF: We need a general
23 diploma so the kids can even get into the
24 service, though.

1 COMMISSIONER ELIA: That would
2 probably be the equivalent of the local
3 diploma now.

4 And you talked about the curriculum
5 should -- right now the plan and the
6 recommendation that came from the task force
7 was very clearly to put the curriculum
8 development in the hands of the local
9 districts. Once we've identified these are
10 the standards and the assessments are
11 revolved around the standards, the curriculum
12 and what's done in the classroom should be a
13 local decision.

14 And as a matter of fact, the work
15 that's been done by many teachers is being
16 shared with other teachers in the state so
17 that in fact it can be great work that's done
18 and somebody else doesn't have to do it
19 again.

20 And we've had the opportunity --
21 Chancellor Fariña, from New York, has made it
22 available, the curriculum that was developed
23 in New York City, so that it can be
24 available. We're putting it online for our

1 teachers so that they can see and use and
2 work off of some great work done in the city.

3 And we have other models that we are
4 expanding as well. New Visions is a
5 not-for-profit that's done some great
6 curriculum work, and we're using that as an
7 opportunity for our teachers to have a model
8 to use.

9 We clearly still have the modules that
10 are on Engage New York. Those -- many
11 teachers really like those. They should
12 never have been a restrictive kind of thing,
13 they should have been a model that could be
14 used not to be scripted but rather as an
15 option for teachers. That's what we want to
16 do so. And it's important, I believe, for
17 local control of the curriculum, working with
18 teachers to develop what they feel is most
19 relevant for the kids that they have in their
20 classroom.

21 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you.

22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NOLAN: Thank you very
23 much for a tremendous response, Commissioner.
24 Really a great response.

1 ASSEMBLYMAN GRAF: I got an extra five
2 minutes out of it. Thank you.

3 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you. Next is
4 Senator Comrie.

5 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Before that, I'd
6 just like to introduce Assemblywoman Hooper.
7 And Assemblyman Titone has joined us.

8 ASSEMBLYMAN OAKS: And Assemblyman
9 Butler.

10 SENATOR COMRIE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
11 Good morning, Commissioner.

12 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Good morning.

13 SENATOR COMRIE: The Governor spoke in
14 his State of the State speech about community
15 schools and the community schools
16 environment. Can you give us some details,
17 if you have any, about what his vision is for
18 the community schools environment that he's
19 talking about putting in, and if there are
20 any definitive plans on what it looks like or
21 if it's going to include nonprofit groups
22 that are going to be in the school? Any
23 detail on that?

24 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Yes. Well, the

1 whole concept of a community school is that
2 the school be a center point to provide
3 opportunities to access supports for children
4 and families that attend that school and are
5 in that community.

6 And depending on the needs of the
7 community, it can look very different. I've
8 visited schools in New York City that have
9 not-for-profits that actually have offices
10 and work all day in the school with students
11 and teachers and staff. And I've also
12 visited schools in other places where the
13 concept of community school is that after
14 school there's lots of opportunities for
15 students to have access to programming that
16 might not be included in the regular academic
17 day, and those kinds of connections to social
18 services and resources that are available in
19 the community. So you might have a United
20 Way program, you might have a Boys and Girls
21 Club program or a YMCA program.

22 So the question that you had about
23 not-for-profits, that is a very common model
24 that is used, where not-for-profits become

1 part of providing services for the children
2 and families at that school.

3 SENATOR COMRIE: So I noticed that you
4 didn't have it in your presentation. Is
5 there a dollar amount that has been attached
6 to it? And if there's a committee that's
7 working to put it together, since you're
8 saying it's going to be shaped according to
9 the needs of the district?

10 Just to remind you, I represent Queens
11 School Districts 29, 28 and 27, primarily.
12 One of our issues is that we have some of the
13 longest commute times for any parent in New
14 York City. Coming from the edge of Queens in
15 a transportation desert, most parents have to
16 leave for work at 7 o'clock in the morning
17 and they don't get home until 7 o'clock at
18 night.

19 We don't have any type of community
20 school program in any of those districts
21 right now. And I'd really like to see how
22 that's going to be shaped, who is going to be
23 part of shaping it, so that there's a
24 universal model that can be -- I know there

1 needs to be interchangeable parts for
2 different districts and different areas, but
3 needs to be at least one consistent model
4 that we can work from so that it's not a
5 hodgepodge of different things that don't
6 work.

7 You know, I benefited from attending a
8 school that was open until 7 o'clock at
9 night. It made a big difference in my
10 growing up. And I think that we need to have
11 that model for all schools, frankly, across
12 the state where we can have children staying
13 in school and off the streets. So I hope
14 that we can start to work to that model to
15 make sure that that's a statewide model as
16 well.

17 Is there a plan or a process that is
18 going to help set up that community school
19 program? And who's going to be involved in
20 it?

21 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Well, the proposal
22 that is part of the Executive Budget provides
23 \$100 million in new community school aids,
24 with \$75 million available for struggling and

1 persistently struggling schools that are in
2 receivership. Twenty-five million would be
3 available for other high-needs districts
4 identified under the Needs/Resource Capacity
5 Index.

6 So that's kind of the overarching
7 discussion that's already been made and is
8 part of that Executive Budget.

9 I would agree with you that it's
10 important for us to provide a model. Now, as
11 you pointed out, some schools and districts
12 find specific things that they need for their
13 families. Providing the opportunity for open
14 schools early in the morning for parents,
15 that can accommodate parents that go to work
16 early, and after school, I think is a very
17 important model. And particularly in middle
18 school. I mean, that is a time when having
19 consistent kind of activities after school
20 keeps kids doing the right things.

21 And so we don't have any more
22 information on that. And we are very
23 supportive of community schools. I am
24 concerned that if a school that was in

1 receivership -- so it fits the criteria
2 that's discussed there -- has already done
3 the community school and started it, would
4 they have access to the funding under the
5 proposal. And I think those are all things
6 that need to be worked out.

7 SENATOR COMRIE: I hope we can be part
8 of those discussions and that those
9 discussions are -- that we have an
10 opportunity to weigh in on those things to
11 make sure that we have the right providers
12 and the right models so that it's done --
13 even in schools where they're trying do it
14 already, I think there's some confusion about
15 what the proper way is to shape it and where
16 those continued resources are going to come
17 from.

18 A second question, the Governor had a
19 program to upgrade technology and
20 infrastructure and wifi access in schools.

21 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Yes.

22 SENATOR COMRIE: Can you give us an
23 update on where that is and how that's moving
24 forward?

1 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Yes. So that's
2 the Smart Schools Bond. And we have
3 approximately -- the districts are providing
4 the proposals. We are helping them through
5 our RICs centers that are dispersed around
6 the state to come up with what is a positive
7 approach to how they expend those funds.

8 The breakdown of proposed
9 expenditures, there are six categories that
10 are allowed under the Smart Schools Bond Act.
11 Those include classroom connectivity,
12 community connectivity, classroom technology,
13 the pre-K classrooms, high-tech security, and
14 the replacement of transportable classroom
15 units. So those are the things that are
16 allowed under the Smart Schools Bond Act.

17 Proposals for this have been submitted
18 and are put through our facilities review
19 group. And we're processing those to get
20 them out.

21 SENATOR COMRIE: So those are being
22 processed by your information and technology
23 staff, or is it something that each school
24 district has to apply for, or each community

1 or municipality has to apply for? How does
2 that get broken down?

3 COMMISSIONER ELIA: So it was approved
4 in 2014 so that they could acquire the
5 technology equipment, install the broadband,
6 and construct and enhance their education
7 facilities and install high-tech security.
8 Those are the things that are allowed under
9 it. They have to send proposals to us for
10 the expenditures, and then they are able to
11 expend those funds after that approval.

12 SENATOR COMRIE: Okay. I'm just
13 concerned about how it's breaking down to the
14 local level. Because I still have many
15 principals that are speaking to me about the
16 need for technology upgrades and actually
17 wiring upgrades, because they can't even get
18 the building up to spec because the buildings
19 are so old.

20 So I'm curious, and if you could send
21 me some details on how that's being broken
22 down so we can inform our principals of what
23 they need to do to get into consideration for
24 that available money.

1 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Senator, we'll
2 sent that to you.

3 SENATOR COMRIE: Thank you.

4 COMMISSIONER ELIA: You're welcome.

5 SENATOR COMRIE: And my last question
6 is just kind of a follow-up to that, that you
7 talked about your lack of ability to provide
8 technical support and that you're
9 understaffed in the ability to do technical
10 support and information.

11 Are you working with the various
12 municipalities to empower them to pick up
13 what you're not able to do as far as making
14 sure that the technical support and
15 information is getting out to all of the
16 school districts?

17 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Well, relative to
18 the Smart Bond, yes, our staffs -- there are
19 17 centers that are technology-based centers
20 that work with our BOCES programs, and they
21 are working on what are smart expenditures of
22 the Smart Bond money. And they've worked
23 with individual school districts and have
24 given them ideas on what should be the best

1 investments for them that would be long term.

2 And so that is occurring on a regular
3 basis. And I was with them this week, on
4 Monday they had a meeting here in Albany, and
5 we had a long conversation about providing
6 those resources and the expertise that they
7 have in technology planning with the
8 districts across the state.

9 SENATOR COMRIE: Thank you,
10 Commissioner. I appreciate your answers. I
11 hope that we can do more to ensure that those
12 school districts and those principals that
13 don't have good grant writers at least get
14 the information in a simple enough form that
15 they can get caught up too. Because if not,
16 there will always be a disparity that can't
17 be bridged.

18 Do I need to repeat that since the
19 phone was ringing?

20 (Laughter.)

21 COMMISSIONER ELIA: No, I'm good.

22 SENATOR COMRIE: Thank you. Thank
23 you, Commissioner.

24 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Phones have

1 incredible music on them now.

2 SENATOR COMRIE: Yeah, they do.

3 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you.

4 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you, Senator.

5 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Assemblyman

6 Brindisi.

7 ASSEMBLYMAN BRINDISI: Thank you,

8 Chairman.

9 Thank you, Commissioner. I want to
10 ask you briefly about my two favorite
11 acronyms, CTEs and ELLs.

12 First, regarding CTEs, I want to thank
13 you for your work on expanding Pathways to
14 Graduation. The concern I have is you've
15 made a request now for a few years to
16 increase the BOCES aid as well as the special
17 services aid, which has not been met by the
18 Legislature. And I'm concerned about how the
19 4+1 Pathways is going to move forward if we
20 don't follow through on that request. How do
21 you see that moving forward?

22 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Well, I think that
23 there's no question we can expand the
24 Pathways, which is one of the actions that

1 must be taken. But then we have to make sure
2 that students have equitable access across
3 the state to those Pathways or to technical
4 career programs that are relevant for their
5 particular community.

6 The BOCES programs have been the
7 center point of much of that. Many of our
8 districts outside of BOCES also present and
9 provide CTE programming in their high
10 schools.

11 And the proposal that we have
12 specifically relates to the instructional
13 salaries. It's a big issue for us to be able
14 to get the quality of the individuals to come
15 in and work in our programs as the teacher if
16 in fact, out in the real world, they can make
17 more money. And so I think that there is a
18 tradeoff. But we have not had increases in
19 that funding, and it's absolutely critical to
20 do it.

21 CTE programming is very, very strongly
22 connected to the lifeblood of an expansion of
23 an economy in a state. And if you talk to
24 any business that's considering going into a

1 state or if you talk to businesses that are
2 here that are considering expanding, their
3 one question is do I have the workforce to
4 hire that is ready to be able to move to
5 this.

6 And I think it's critical for us to
7 keep in mind that investments in CTE are
8 those investments that will, long term,
9 benefit us across the board.

10 ASSEMBLYMAN BRINDISI: That's music to
11 my ears.

12 Regarding ELLs, can you expand a
13 little bit on your proposal for \$75 million
14 for ELLs? I don't think there's anything in
15 the Executive proposal related to ELLs, but
16 can you tell me a little bit more how that
17 money would be targeted, which districts
18 would be receiving that money, and what it's
19 for?

20 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Right. Well, we
21 have increased by 20 percent the population
22 of our ELL students in the State of New York.
23 Right now that is about 8 percent of our
24 population. And so those students have

1 special needs and need to have focused
2 instruction to support them. And there's a
3 couple of things that we've talked about, and
4 it's in our proposal, is expanding the
5 availability of assessments in the native
6 language, which is an important expenditure.

7 And we've also talked about
8 professional development for teachers and
9 support for districts as we implement the
10 154. And I think that what we're talking
11 about really is making sure that those
12 students who are in our country who want to
13 take advantage of educational programming
14 that we have the availability of that and are
15 not hindered by the fact that they're in the
16 process of learning another language.

17 I think it's also important for us to
18 recognize in this global world how important
19 multiple languages are. And to make sure --
20 and we're moving towards a specialized
21 diploma specifically related to languages
22 other than English. And we think that that
23 will help to support and focus on those
24 students that have been able to learn more

1 than one language or bring their native
2 language, learn English, and in many cases
3 learn another language.

4 ASSEMBLYMAN BRINDISI: Is that money
5 targeted towards certain districts that have
6 higher percentages of --

7 COMMISSIONER ELIA: No, it's where the
8 students are.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN BRINDISI: Okay. And then
10 finally, just one final question. Regarding
11 the facilities planning office, we're hearing
12 a lot from districts about a backlog from SED
13 getting plans approved. And I think we did
14 appropriate some money last year in the
15 budget to hire some more engineers and
16 architects, and I just want to see what the
17 status of that is. Are you moving forward
18 with hiring more employees there?

19 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Okay, so thank you
20 very much for the expenditure that you gave
21 to us of \$800,000. We're in the process --
22 we've hired firms that can take some of that
23 backlog and help us to move through it
24 quickly, and I can give you an update of

1 that.

2 Regarding private engineering firms to
3 review and approve backlogged school
4 projects, three contracts are approved, a
5 total of 25 projects are currently being
6 reviewed by those firms, and the remaining
7 contracts are expected to be approved in the
8 near future, and the projects will be shipped
9 to them immediately.

10 Then in contracting with multiple
11 engineering firms that specialize in energy
12 review -- because as we do this, the energy
13 review projects come to us and we have to
14 approve those as well -- three contracts are
15 approved, a total of 10 projects are
16 currently being reviewed by those two firms,
17 five additional projects.

18 We have a backlog, there's no
19 question. And we're requesting, in
20 support -- we've reduced the backlog by eight
21 weeks so far. And we still have a lot of
22 work to do, but we're using that funding and
23 appreciate the fact that it continues into
24 next year's budget.

1 ASSEMBLYMAN BRINDISI: Thank you,
2 Commissioner.

3 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you.

4 We've been joined by Assemblyman
5 O'Donnell.

6 Senator?

7 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you very
8 much.

9 Next would be Senator Velmanette
10 Montgomery.

11 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Thank you.

12 Good morning, Commissioner.

13 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Good morning.

14 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: I want to start
15 by thanking you and the Regents for adopting
16 the program that you have requested funding
17 for which seeks to improve the outcomes for
18 boys and young men of color. I know that
19 there was a lot of work that was done on
20 that, and you also listened particularly to
21 young people, which was very different, and I
22 appreciate the work that you and Dr. Young
23 have done on that.

24 I just want to raise a couple of

1 issues with you. I'm looking at page 22 of
2 your report. And I'm very pleased that you
3 have included a component of the funding for
4 that program -- My Brother's Keeper program,
5 I like to call it, the New York State
6 version -- of developing exemplary school
7 models, because that seems to be where we
8 never get around to replicating what actually
9 works. And so I just want to raise something
10 with you with regard to what works.

11 There are several high schools in my
12 district that are either CTE or they are
13 high-end academic performing schools, high
14 graduation rates, technology. And I'll name
15 a few of them. Brooklyn Tech is one of them.
16 That's sort of one of the best schools in the
17 state, I would imagine, possibly in the
18 nation. The Harbor School I want to mention
19 is another school that really works. P-TECH,
20 obviously, is one that works. The Bard High
21 School is one that works.

22 And so my question to you is -- and
23 several of the principals at those schools
24 and others that I've spoken to have talked

1 about the need for preparing students before
2 they get to the high school in order to
3 assist. So it sort of works into your notion
4 of creating a pipeline, cradle to grave --
5 not cradle to grave, cradle to college,
6 excuse me. I'm thinking grave; I don't know
7 why.

8 So I want to ask you, where are you
9 and the Regents with looking at the
10 possibility of increasing the middle school
11 aspect of our system that would allow those
12 high schools to be more directly connected to
13 a middle school as a feeder school? I know
14 the Harbor School in particular has requested
15 that; they are in the process of trying to
16 plan for one right now. Brooklyn Tech has
17 talked about it, P-TECH.

18 So I'm really very, very interested in
19 seeing to what extent you can help to foster
20 that movement. And in relationship to that,
21 those high-end schools have a very, very
22 specific need for teachers to be able to work
23 with young people, teachers who are
24 certified, perhaps, in areas that we don't

1 currently have certification for.

2 So I'm really very interested in where
3 you are with that process and how soon we can
4 expect that there will be some way to address
5 that.

6 And the last part of my questioning is
7 around the Early College programs. I would
8 really like to have an update on where the
9 programs that you already have, where you are
10 with that. And I didn't see where that fits
11 in with your budget request, so -- and that
12 is another program that I'm aware of that
13 absolutely works to the great benefit of a
14 large number of students. Especially in
15 those places where students don't have a
16 large selection of advanced college placement
17 and so forth, they can begin to be integrated
18 as college students earlier and perhaps save
19 a lot in terms of having a college experience
20 even before they graduate from high school.
21 And that has really made a tremendous
22 difference to a large number of young people
23 in my district in particular.

24 So those are two parts of my question.

1 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Okay, the first
2 question related to middle schools and the
3 support for the development earlier in either
4 an interest or a skill level to move into the
5 high schools. I think it's an absolutely
6 critical thing. I was with a group of
7 superintendents this week, and they brought
8 up the issue and have asked us to look
9 specifically at what we currently have in
10 regulations related to middle school
11 curriculum, and that we allow for shifts in
12 that so that we can have districts who want
13 to develop specific curriculums for middle
14 school and put career and technical and/or
15 other supports for higher academics into the
16 middle school grades.

17 So that is something we will be
18 working on. Right now it's not something
19 that -- we do have some districts that have
20 done it successfully. And, again, using
21 those models that are positive, that have
22 been supportive, I think it's really smart of
23 us to use those as a way of kind of sharing
24 the ideas and not to have to do that again.

1 Regarding the certification,
2 Chancellor Fariña and I have talked about the
3 specific issues of getting teachers who are
4 certified in areas where we don't have
5 teachers that have that certification and
6 what we can do to be more open, particularly
7 in areas of career and technical where an
8 individual may have developed the skills and
9 be excellent at the work that they're doing,
10 and we want to have them to work with our
11 students, but they don't have some of the
12 other prerequisites that are normally part of
13 certification.

14 So we're looking at that closely. And
15 we're going to be looking at certification
16 across the board.

17 As you know, we have a number of
18 places across the state where there are
19 openings for teachers, and we need to make
20 sure that we have quality teachers in our
21 classrooms. We also need to make sure that
22 if we have people from the community who can
23 come in and share their expertise, we give
24 them the opportunity to do that in more

1 creative ways and with more flexibility. So
2 that is also one thing that we're looking at.

3 And the Early College High Schools,
4 the department has -- we currently are
5 providing \$7 million, or \$3.5 million over
6 the current funding levels. We'd like to
7 have an increase in our Early College High
8 Schools.

9 And I can tell you from experience
10 that Early College High Schools are a way of
11 leveling the playing field for all students.
12 It's the availability of coursework in both
13 middle school and in high school that allows
14 students to matriculate some kind of credit.
15 And whether the student is terribly
16 successful in the program or not, the fact
17 that they have taken a course that puts them
18 in -- their perception that they can do
19 higher-level coursework is extremely
20 important. And I once read a study,
21 26 percent of the students in high school who
22 take and/or complete a college-level
23 course -- they have a 26 percent higher rate
24 of graduating in four years.

1 Four years now is not the norm. And
2 to have students graduating in four years
3 because we've given them a step up I think is
4 extremely important.

5 So we can get you more information on
6 the Early College High School, but we have
7 requested, both for Early College High
8 Schools and for P-TECH, an expansion. I
9 think that P-TECH is a model that has
10 received much acclaim, and we are seeing
11 students that would not be a traditional,
12 what we would call a traditional
13 go-to-college kind of student, be very
14 successful and move into jobs at IBM and
15 other great partners who are supporting those
16 programs with us. So we're very excited
17 about those.

18 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Thank you. And
19 just lastly, I'm very happy that you're
20 focusing on CTE. And I just want to tell you
21 that at the Harbor School, to see students
22 engaged -- and these are students who
23 otherwise would not have access to this kind
24 of education -- is extremely exciting. And I

1 think that's what we hope to have more of.

2 And just so that you know, that many
3 of those students have been able to graduate
4 from the Harbor School. And for the first
5 time, students from my district in Brooklyn
6 were eligible to go into the Maritime
7 College. So it's now become a feeder into
8 that college, first time in history. So I'm
9 very excited about it and look forward to
10 working with you and the Regents to do
11 whatever we can to make sure that this kind
12 of education is available to more students.

13 COMMISSIONER ELIA: That kind of
14 education should be available across the
15 State of New York everywhere.

16 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Yes. Abso --
17 well, yes. Thank you.

18 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you, Senator.

19 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Thank you,
20 Senator.

21 Assemblywoman Malliotakis.

22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MALLIOTAKIS: Good
23 morning, Commissioner. Thank you so much for
24 being here with us.

1 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Good morning.

2 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MALLIOTAKIS: Actually,
3 a lot of my questions were already answered,
4 so I --

5 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Good. Thank you
6 very much.

7 (Laughter.)

8 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MALLIOTAKIS: A few
9 remaining.

10 (Laughter.)

11 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MALLIOTAKIS: I'm very
12 pleased that the administration has put
13 together this commission to evaluate the
14 Common Core. It seems for a while there,
15 there was a reluctancy to admit there was
16 significant flaws in it.

17 And with regards to -- the teacher
18 evaluation is an important component, the
19 reduction of testing is a very important
20 component. One of the components is the
21 developmentally disabled and making sure that
22 testing and curriculum is appropriate for
23 their learning abilities. And so that is, I
24 think, one of the biggest concerns that I

1 have as we're proceeding.

2 And I wanted to know, with regards to
3 that, what are you looking specifically to --
4 how are you going to evaluate that and move
5 forward?

6 And secondly, what efforts are needed
7 to engage, you know, parents in school
8 communities as we continue in this process?
9 I know you've had nine public hearings, but
10 from now on as you're continuing to work on
11 the changes.

12 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Well, the last
13 seven months I've spent a lot of time, 20,000
14 miles in my car, traveling around the state
15 and meeting with various groups.

16 I think that much of what we need to
17 do is make sure that people understand and
18 are part of this process.

19 And so in terms of the work that needs
20 to be done, if you look at the surveys, it's
21 very clear that parents learn about what's
22 happening in the schools and what's happening
23 in education from their child's teacher.
24 They trust the teacher. Otherwise, they

1 probably wouldn't have their child with them
2 in the classroom. And so when the teacher
3 speaks, then that's what they believe.

4 And principals are equally important
5 in communications, as are superintendents.
6 They are part of the local community. And I
7 think it's very important that the State Ed
8 Department get the information out on the
9 changes that have been made that are
10 responsive to the comments and the concerns
11 that people have had. Everyone will not be
12 pleased. Everyone would like it done
13 yesterday. And we're moving in a very
14 appropriate way, I believe, to make the
15 changes necessary.

16 I just want to remind you that some of
17 the concerns that people had was that we
18 moved too fast. And we don't want to repeat
19 those concerns in how we react now to make
20 the changes that need to be made.

21 So the work that we're doing now is
22 specifically getting information out through
23 the district superintendents at the BOCES and
24 the Big 5 school districts, and spreading

1 that out to principals and superintendents
2 across the state. We have approximately 700
3 districts in the State of New York, and the
4 communication has to occur at that local
5 level.

6 We're really supporting them to do
7 that. I think that's going to be a key for
8 us in getting this word and the information
9 out on the changes that are occurring and the
10 timeline that's occurring and why it should
11 be done in a way that allows us to do it
12 together and get input as we go.

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MALLIOTAKIS: And
14 whether it be through the local school
15 districts or the principals, we have to make
16 sure also that the PTAs and the community
17 education councils are included. If my
18 office can be helpful in my district, please
19 let me know.

20 With regards to the heroin curriculum,
21 in 2014 the Legislature passed legislation
22 requiring that opioid and heroin education
23 was included in the drug abuse and updated
24 every three years. Can you give us just an

1 update on where you're at with that and what
2 progress has been made?

3 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Well, we've worked
4 with other state agencies on developing that
5 curriculum and moving that out, but I'll
6 provide that update for you when I have more
7 specifics.

8 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MALLIOTAKIS: Okay.

9 I think vocational training is
10 extremely important. And I think when we
11 have this debate oftentimes in Albany about
12 the minimum wage, I think one of the things
13 that we don't often talk about is trying get
14 people off minimum wage. And I think that
15 vocational training offers that career path.
16 And I think it's so important that we invest
17 in vocational training, and I like the work
18 that's being done with the Pathway. Is there
19 adequate access, in your opinion, to
20 vocational training throughout the state?

21 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Well, I would
22 agree with you that it's extremely important.
23 It is not equal across the state. And so you
24 have some areas that have access to multiple

1 programs for their students, and you have
2 other areas that don't.

3 And I think we just heard from
4 Brooklyn about some great programs that are
5 very successful there. Every place doesn't
6 have those programs. And so I think what we
7 have to do is be very purposeful in making
8 sure that when we expand and provide
9 resources, that it is done across the state.

10 Now, the BOCES proposal for CTE, in
11 our BOCES that's one of the core functions
12 that they provide for districts in their
13 area. But I believe that districts also can
14 provide some programming that would be very
15 relevant and connect kids to a career in
16 their community.

17 You're seeing that now. There's been
18 a proposal -- and you may be hearing from the
19 superintendent from Buffalo, Dr. Kriner Cash,
20 that he has a proposal in to turn some of his
21 high schools that have been persistently
22 struggling into schools that are connected to
23 an employer in that very area where the
24 school is located, and really working those

1 programs so that a student can leave high
2 school and be ready to move immediately into
3 a job with that company. And I think that
4 kind of connection is extremely important.

5 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MALLIOTAKIS: Would you
6 be able to provide my office with some of the
7 best programs you think are currently
8 underway in the state, just so I can get an
9 idea of what options there are?

10 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Yes.

11 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MALLIOTAKIS: Thank you.

12 And last question -- this is something
13 that's sort of just, you know, personal to
14 me. I was doing a voter registration drive
15 and I had someone who was 18 years old who
16 handed me the registration, and he had
17 printed where it said "Signature." And so I
18 said, "Oh, no, this is not what you're
19 supposed to print, you have to do your
20 signature." He says, "I don't have a
21 signature." He's like, "I've never learned
22 penmanship in school. We never learned
23 cursive writing in school."

24 I find that to be unbelievable and

1 very disappointing, that our young people are
2 graduating not having a signature. I mean,
3 how are they going to -- you know, they're
4 going to open a bank account, they're going
5 to sign checks, they're going to do legal
6 documents throughout their career and life.
7 And to not have a signature is not only
8 something I think is -- it's not only sad,
9 just in general, as a perspective, but it's
10 something that is a security concern, that
11 anyone can just, write, print their name,
12 there's no identity.

13 What are your thoughts on this? And
14 can we change this to make sure that it's
15 part of the curriculum in the State of
16 New York?

17 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Well, first of
18 all, I think we have to keep in perspective
19 that that may in fact not have been the focus
20 of what the curriculum was in that -- in
21 wherever that student went to school, and
22 maybe they didn't talk about it. But I have
23 been in schools across the state, and
24 everywhere I go there is writing work up on

1 the walls from the students. And they're
2 writing the work in cursive.

3 Now, that is part of a curriculum that
4 is much more expansive. And if we talk about
5 the pedagogy of higher standards, we are
6 including writing as a key component to that,

7 So I would suggest to you that writing
8 is important. And I don't -- I can't explain
9 how that student would respond the way they
10 did. There are some -- there are some
11 programs in the past that I have seen across
12 the country that have not -- that have left
13 writing as you know it out and put more
14 emphasis on using technology for writing and
15 rewriting, et cetera. And if that's the
16 case, then I think we have to make sure that
17 there's a balance across all curriculum
18 areas.

19 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MALLIOTAKIS: Yeah, I
20 would appreciate it if you looked further
21 into this, because I had a conversation with
22 my teachers in my district following that,
23 and they just said it's just not required
24 anymore. And so I'm not sure if that's a

1 local decision -- I assume it would be a
2 State Ed decision because it's part of the
3 curriculum. But if you could look into that
4 and get back to me, I'd appreciate it.

5 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Sure, we'll do
6 that.

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MALLIOTAKIS: Thank you.

8 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you.

10 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you.

11 Next is Senator Liz Krueger.

12 SENATOR KRUEGER: Good morning,
13 Commissioner.

14 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Good morning.

15 SENATOR KRUEGER: Delighted you have
16 joined us in New York State. And as I had
17 mentioned to you when we met, I am very
18 pleased to see that you are moving forward
19 with your waiver to the federal government
20 allowing for portfolio high school
21 completion. Am I correct that's still part
22 of the plan?

23 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Well, we've
24 requested it. Under the new law, we think we

1 may have some flexibility, and we're hoping
2 that we can do that and develop some
3 different types of assessments. So yes, we
4 are. I can't tell you what the timeline will
5 be, but we're looking at it.

6 SENATOR KRUEGER: And on timelines, I
7 know at least one other person asked about
8 the technology bond money.

9 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Yes.

10 SENATOR KRUEGER: Can you say how many
11 school districts have already applied for
12 that money?

13 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Sure, we have
14 that.

15 SENATOR KRUEGER: And while you're
16 looking, also what you think the approximate
17 timeline is for approval once a district does
18 apply for the money.

19 COMMISSIONER ELIA: So right now we
20 have \$48 million that has been proposed so
21 far. I don't have the actual number of
22 schools that have submitted and been approved
23 and included in that 48 million, but we'll
24 get those specifics to you.

1 But it's -- under the six categories I
2 have the amounts under each category: \$20
3 million for classroom connectivity; 10,000,
4 which is a project for a local library, for
5 community connectivity; classroom technology
6 is \$19.6 million; pre-K classrooms is \$2.1
7 million; high-tech security is 5.7 million.
8 And the replacement of transportable
9 classroom units is zero so far, so that has
10 not been a focus of the funding.

11 SENATOR KRUEGER: And based on your
12 answers, I now think you're saying that a
13 district doesn't apply for the lump sum; as
14 one proposal, the individual schools or
15 individual projects must make an application?

16 COMMISSIONER ELIA: I believe that the
17 districts -- and we'll get the specifics to
18 you -- the districts apply, and they apply by
19 school, and the particular category of
20 funding that they're accessing is part of
21 their request.

22 SENATOR KRUEGER: So if I was a large
23 school district, say New York City, where I'm
24 from, the assumption is they would be filing

1 for their entire amount, but it would be
2 broken down item by item for different
3 schools, different projects?

4 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Yes.

5 SENATOR KRUEGER: And then you would
6 approve or disapprove line items, not yes to
7 New York City School District or Yonkers
8 School District or no?

9 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Yeah. So they
10 would submit. If it was in the categories
11 that I just pointed out, then it would move
12 forward. There's a governance council that
13 has to approve, which includes SUNY, the
14 State Ed Department, and the Department of
15 Budget. And so those three have to approve,
16 as it moves forward, to get the funding
17 allocated.

18 SENATOR KRUEGER: How frequently do
19 they meet?

20 COMMISSIONER ELIA: We haven't had a
21 meeting yet. So these are -- this is -- the
22 funding that we have here are these requests
23 with those various dollar amounts.

24 SENATOR KRUEGER: And are there three

1 votes taken, then, or is it a consensus? Can
2 any one of these three veto a project, like a
3 PACB model?

4 COMMISSIONER ELIA: I think that by
5 the time the project gets to them, it's gone
6 through the steps for approval. But we will
7 get the full process in place and we'll --
8 it's in place. Let me send it to you so you
9 are aware of exactly how it's occurring.

10 And if any of you hear that there's
11 districts that are not aware of that --
12 because we've been very, very purposeful in
13 getting the information out -- please let us
14 know so we make sure that we support them and
15 help them to make those decisions.

16 SENATOR KRUEGER: So let me raise the
17 two concerns I have based on not knowing the
18 full answers.

19 One, you might have any given school
20 district put a proposal in that lists many
21 items, and in fact the council or the staff,
22 prior to going to council, might have
23 problems only with a couple of the items, the
24 projects?

1 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Right. Mm-hmm.

2 SENATOR KRUEGER: And I'd hate to see
3 an entire district's proposal being rejected
4 or delayed because perhaps out of 35
5 different projects you had a problem with one
6 or two. So I'd want to at least be reassured
7 that a school district could then get
8 approval for everything but whatever the
9 items were within their proposal.

10 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Right.

11 SENATOR KRUEGER: And two, as many of
12 us who spend time up here have seen,
13 sometimes when you have a board or a
14 commission that then takes a vote on
15 something, even once you've made your
16 recommendations, any one of those three
17 entities you describe might decide, perhaps
18 for political reasons, that they wanted to
19 take a no vote --

20 COMMISSIONER ELIA: I'm shocked.

21 SENATOR KRUEGER: -- instead of a yes
22 vote.

23 I know you're shocked, because you're
24 new to New York, but I am not new to New

1 where we are in terms of releasing and what
2 the process and where anything might be in
3 that pipeline.

4 SENATOR KRUEGER: And again, I
5 appreciate your looking to help me understand
6 whether the way the legislation is actually
7 drafted, any one of those three actually has
8 a veto power.

9 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Thank you.

10 SENATOR KRUEGER: Because I think that
11 would have been an oversight of the
12 legislation. Thank you.

13 There was a question earlier that you
14 did answer about -- actually, you raised it
15 in your testimony, how we have many models of
16 pre-K and that you would like to see
17 something done about that.

18 In my understanding, there's both
19 regulatory change that would be required but
20 there also may be an issue of different
21 amounts of money for different categories of
22 pre-K. Does your department have a specific
23 proposal about how this can be fixed? And
24 does it require the Legislature, or can it be

1 done through SED?

2 COMMISSIONER ELIA: No, it does
3 require the Legislature. We do have a
4 specific proposal. And what we are proposing
5 is that we incorporate all of the different
6 programs under one program for pre-K with one
7 set of rules, and that then that be
8 administered and determined and be connected
9 to SED.

10 SENATOR KRUEGER: And usually when you
11 make changes in multiple programs, you've got
12 winners and losers. So how would you move
13 forward so that you weren't penalizing some
14 category of existing programs?

15 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Well, the programs
16 are all for pre-K, and they're targeting
17 different students. Right? And they came in
18 at different times. And the rules were put
19 in place specific -- at that point in time.
20 And there may in fact have been a focus on
21 one part of the state or another. But what
22 we're saying is, as we would -- and we would
23 have to work through those things, Senator.

24 But I think it's really important

1 that, rather than adding another program,
2 that we take the time to make this correction
3 now and expand our pre-K each year to
4 ultimately get to particularly all of our
5 4-year-olds and the 3-year-olds as we're
6 adding.

7 SENATOR KRUEGER: I don't disagree
8 with you, for the record. And speaking for
9 my district on the East Side of Manhattan, we
10 don't have the room to expand for 3-year-olds
11 at this point. We're still struggling to
12 make sure we have adequate seats for the
13 4-year-olds in an overcrowded subdistrict of
14 New York City. So I'm not a big believer in
15 rushing to 3-year-olds at this time.

16 But I do want to I guess emphasize
17 that philosophically I think merging all into
18 one model makes sense and actually is simpler
19 all round for everybody providing pre-K
20 throughout the state. But there's a
21 difference between raising all ships by
22 making sure that you're providing adequate
23 funding for everybody as opposed to turning
24 around and saying, Okay, you four over there,

1 you have to take a cut because we're evening
2 out. And I think there's real ramifications
3 for that in the real world. So I'm hoping
4 you can view it in that perspective.

5 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Well, we certainly
6 will. And if we're able to move that
7 forward, we really are interested in working
8 through those difficulties. There's no
9 question they were developed at specific
10 times with specific things in mind. And I
11 think it would be an important factor as we
12 try to incorporate them into one program.

13 SENATOR KRUEGER: Have the Regents
14 taken a position on the East Ramapo issue
15 vis-a-vis the recommendations of that task
16 force and the call for actual legislation to
17 address the problems?

18 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Well, the Regents
19 heard the report from the monitors that were
20 there, Dennis Walcott and the other two
21 monitors. And in terms of action taken
22 beyond that, they accepted the report, and
23 we're continuing to work with East Ramapo.

24 SENATOR KRUEGER: Are you getting

1 anywhere?

2 COMMISSIONER ELIA: I think we're
3 moving forward. It's, as you're well aware,
4 a difficult situation. And it's really a
5 critical thing for us -- East Ramapo has some
6 very, very specific needs in terms of
7 funding. And I think that we've got to be
8 able to know that when the funds that you as
9 a group decide would be appropriate, if you
10 do, that we're able to then move them into
11 the district and make sure that there's a
12 very targeted focus on the use of those funds
13 to support what we know are really a severe
14 lack of both resources in terms of facilities
15 and resources in terms of instructional
16 materials and support for teachers.

17 SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you. My time
18 is up. Thank you.

19 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you, Senator.

20 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you very
21 much.

22 Assemblyman Glick.

23 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: We're on the
24 cusp of "good morning" or "good afternoon."

1 So let me just ask you two quick questions.

2 One relates to an issue that was
3 raised earlier but in a different context.
4 The state is obligated, through the Dignity
5 for All Students law, to ensure that students
6 throughout the state, each school building
7 has a plan and someone who is aware of the
8 need to ensure a safe, respectful environment
9 for all students. This is targeted primarily
10 at ensuring that bullying does not take
11 place, that all teachers are ultimately
12 trained to address instances either in their
13 school, their classrooms or within the
14 school.

15 It's especially important as you move
16 into junior high, when kids are getting a
17 little bit more rambunctious. So I'm
18 wondering if you could tell us a little bit
19 more about what is happening with that.

20 And I also wants to raise to your
21 awareness an effort to -- there is a group in
22 New York City that is developing a positive
23 collaborative learning modality, and it is an
24 attempt to change the culture of schools so

1 that it is a positive environment and
2 students are less likely to be disciplined
3 and less likely to be suspended and more
4 likely to have a variety of schoolteachers,
5 staff, to whom they can go if they are in
6 fact feeling stressed or have certain
7 problems, so that they do not act out.

8 And I'm just wondering if you could
9 talk a little bit more about what the
10 department views as their ability to reach
11 out into school districts to ensure that
12 these efforts and training is actually taking
13 place.

14 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Right. Well, as
15 you pointed out, we did pass legislation here
16 in New York, the Safe Schools Against
17 Violence in Education act in 2000, and then
18 the Dignity for All Students in 2012, and we
19 further addressed school climate by outlawing
20 bullying and harassment and discrimination.
21 And in 2013, the law was amended to include
22 cyberbullying. So we've addressed some of
23 those issues.

24 We've been working with -- the

1 districts have put out guidance,
2 particularly, on specific circumstances that
3 they should be aware of and ways that we
4 believe it's appropriate for them to support
5 all students and have a respectful
6 environment.

7 The whole issue that has come to the
8 fore, then, is how do we know that that's
9 happening. And we have -- the Regents have
10 requested additional funds to make sure that
11 those statutory obligations are being upheld
12 in our schools. So to enhance oversight
13 through regular monitoring and audits --
14 which at this point in time we are not doing,
15 but I think that's an important thing -- and
16 provide support and ensure the accountability
17 of that, one of the things that we've done is
18 we're moving towards a climate survey. I
19 mentioned that earlier.

20 And I think that that will give us
21 more indications of where we are with
22 students, because the students take that
23 survey. And then we get the -- we would get
24 the data on it and it would provide for us

1 kind of an overview of what students are
2 thinking about their environment, whether
3 they've been bullied and do they have someone
4 in their environment they can go to.

5 We also recently were looking at the
6 job descriptions for our guidance counselors
7 and psychologists, and that has come up
8 multiple times, that we have to make sure
9 that we have training for them on strategies
10 that can support a respectful environment for
11 all students, and to help students.

12 Your comment about students feeling
13 that they had support in their school came
14 out very strongly in the student panels that
15 we had in our workgroup for boys and men of
16 color. And the students repeatedly talked
17 about the fact that in environments in school
18 -- and you had a group of different students,
19 two or three different panels -- in
20 environments in their school, if they had the
21 opportunity to interact with their friends in
22 a way that was positive -- and when it
23 wasn't, that there was someone that could
24 help to intervene and almost do peer

1 counseling with them -- it made enormous
2 differences in how they interacted with the
3 work they were doing for academics and the
4 work that they were doing in their -- many of
5 them had jobs after school and were doing
6 other things.

7 So I think that the role that SED
8 plays is one to both support but also to
9 monitor. And I will tell you we have not
10 done the kind of monitoring that I think
11 would be a necessary thing.

12 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Do you believe
13 that to some extent part of the professional
14 development, that there is an element that
15 could be added to professional development
16 that would include a component that would
17 address the issues of recognizing students
18 who are being isolated?

19 And a lot of this has to do with --
20 we've seen a level of violence that comes out
21 of kids who are consistently isolated from
22 their classmates, and their frustration
23 unfortunately comes out in a violent attack.

24 Now, New York State has been very

1 fortunate that we have not had some of the
2 situations, although maybe it happens outside
3 of the school, on the street. So I'm
4 wondering if the department is looking at
5 adding to its recommendations for
6 professional development some component that
7 relates to enhancing the ability of teachers
8 to recognize and identify and report to their
9 principals, and is there a pathway for people
10 to -- either principals or a guidance
11 counselor -- identify students they feel are
12 displaying either isolation or aggression
13 that could be eliminated early on?

14 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Well, I will tell
15 you I think that it's extremely important for
16 teachers to be aware. And that's one of the
17 things that when you're talking about what
18 makes an effective teacher, someone that
19 really connects with kids, they have
20 relationships with them. And they can tell
21 when there are actions that are occurring in
22 a classroom that are not productive for any
23 child nor for the classroom itself.

24 So I would underscore the

1 importance -- I've said it multiple times,
2 it's not only about academics that teachers
3 need to have supports, it's for the things
4 that they face every day in their classrooms
5 where we can provide strategies and models
6 that we know work for teachers to intervene
7 and then what do they do to take it to
8 resources that are in that school to help
9 them.

10 And I think the guidance counselors
11 and principals that work every day should be
12 thinking about that. But I want to
13 underscore the importance of having the data
14 about how students are feeling about their
15 environment, because that is extremely
16 eye-opening for whoever looks at it. And in
17 my experience, using that kind of a survey
18 for climate can be a great staff development
19 activity that's used at the school to target
20 not only what a student is saying about the
21 classrooms that they're in and they're either
22 -- that they're being verbally attacked or
23 that they feel insecure at the school or that
24 they're not being supported, but where does

1 it mainly happen in the school, and what then
2 schools can look at and analyze what they
3 need to do every day to address these issues.

4 It happens to be that a cafeteria is a
5 place where that happens a lot. It does
6 happen in some classrooms, but in a survey
7 you know which ones of the classrooms it
8 happens in, and you also know that there's
9 others where it doesn't.

10 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you.

11 Senator?

12 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you very
13 much.

14 So now it's my turn. And it is great
15 to hear that you share so many of the
16 priorities of the Legislature. And we've
17 heard from our colleagues today things like
18 investing more in our children's education
19 and future.

20 As you know, our Senate majority
21 conference is determined to finally get rid
22 of the Gap Elimination Adjustment, which as
23 you know is a destructive fiscal gimmick that
24 has really taken money away from our

1 children's education for far too long. We
2 need to get rid of it for good.

3 I'm glad to hear that you're focused
4 on improving struggling schools and turning
5 things around. It's great that you're taking
6 action on overhauling the tests -- and I know
7 students, teachers and parents across the
8 state also are very grateful for that. And
9 I'm so happy to hear that you're focused on
10 professional development for teachers,
11 because that is so critical to give them the
12 supports that they need to be the most
13 effective they can be in the classroom.

14 And that ties into something Senator
15 Krueger brought up about the Smart Schools
16 Bond Act, bringing more infrastructure, more
17 technology to our districts. And as you
18 know, the Legislature voted to establish an
19 Online Learning Advisory Council. I
20 authorized the bill. And we're very excited
21 about that fact because it brings more
22 opportunities.

23 As you know -- you know the Southern
24 Tier of Western New York, you know Livingston

1 County, which I represent. You also know
2 that I represent 46 school districts. A
3 couple of them are small city school
4 districts that are struggling; we need to
5 help them. But across the board, my
6 districts are rural. And all the districts
7 across the state need to have more access to
8 more online learning, because it's very
9 difficult to bring these opportunities
10 otherwise, especially in poor rural areas.
11 But every child can have their world opened
12 up and new opportunities through this. We're
13 excited.

14 Dr. David O'Rourke, as you know, is
15 one of the chairs of the advisory council, as
16 is Scott Bischooping, and they've been putting
17 this together.

18 We're very excited about it, but I
19 have some concerns. I wanted to get your
20 take. First of all, where are we at so that
21 we can get this underway?

22 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Well, on page 11
23 in the slide presentation, the Regents
24 request is for \$50 million reimbursed in

1 '17-'18, so it would be a reimbursement from
2 funds spent.

3 But let me say I believe that this is
4 where we can open up the opportunities across
5 the state for all students.

6 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Exactly.

7 COMMISSIONER ELIA: To give you an
8 example, and the committee that you
9 authored -- and thank you very much for that.
10 I think it's really exciting that we have,
11 from a group of people, many of them in
12 education and others not, saying these are
13 the things that we need to be doing to move
14 our students forward, but providing the
15 opportunities across the board for all of our
16 students, so in those rural communities that
17 you represent where we don't have enough
18 students, perhaps, to have a teacher that's
19 teaching AP physics or AP calculus, AB or AP
20 computer science, that we can do those things
21 in another format and still allow our
22 students to have access to that high-level
23 programing is an incredible opportunity that
24 we need to take advantage of.

1 There were some additional funds that
2 were spent under Race to the Top for
3 curriculum that can be put online, and we're
4 ready to move forward on that. But we really
5 believe that not only do we have to have --
6 and this gets back to the training, again,
7 for teachers. We have to have teachers that
8 can be online teachers. And just like
9 anything else, it's a different approach, and
10 so it requires that kind of support and
11 training for teachers so that they can then
12 help our students to be supported and
13 successful with it.

14 The reality is in any employment that
15 you go into, you are going to have to use
16 technology in some way. You're going to
17 either get your training on technology --
18 people don't do the classroom stand and
19 deliver anymore, they really all kind of
20 individualize it. And I can appreciate that.
21 I mean, we are -- people that are going into
22 jobs, our lives are very different. If we
23 have children at home, we do the thing at
24 night, at 11 o'clock at night. If we don't,

1 we might want to do it any time when we can
2 demand that it's there in front of us and we
3 can learn. Our kids are already like that.

4 So the opportunity of putting that in
5 front of them and having that be across the
6 cities -- who have not provided some of the
7 high opportunities for kids that they need
8 to -- or the rural areas, it's a really
9 incredible opportunity. We want to move
10 forward on it as quickly as possible.

11 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: That's fantastic to
12 hear.

13 Now, how many staff members at the
14 department are working on this right now?

15 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Well, the staff
16 members that are working on it have three
17 other jobs.

18 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: And that actually
19 goes into what my concern is. We studied
20 other states that have successfully done
21 major online learning programs, and one of
22 the things that they've done is that they
23 have dedicated staff, and also
24 leadership-level staff, in order for the

1 program to be successful. And that's just
2 one of the things that I want to raise to
3 you, Commissioner, is right now we don't seem
4 to have that structure in place over at the
5 department. And if there's something that we
6 need to do as a Legislature in the State
7 Budget, we need to know that so that we can
8 get this really off the ground.

9 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Well, we have
10 proposed in our budget that there be
11 additional funds that would come to State Ed
12 specifically tied to allocations.

13 Let me give you an example. When the
14 allocation came through for struggling
15 schools and persistently struggling schools,
16 and we're moving towards a receivership
17 model, the funding came with \$75 million for
18 those persistently struggling schools, and
19 there was no funding at all to administer
20 that program.

21 Now, all of you I'm sure have heard
22 and are aware of or may have in your
23 districts schools that are struggling and
24 persistently struggling, and they need help.

1 And often for us from the State Ed
2 Department, we need to be there with them in
3 multiple opportunities to provide guidance in
4 how they can connect the community to the
5 school, what they can do, what these great
6 models are that we have in other places in
7 New York and we can use those as the models.
8 And we didn't receive any funding to do that.

9 So that is just one simple example.
10 For the Smart Schools money in the bond, we
11 are processing and doing that work. We
12 didn't receive any funding for that.

13 So you will see that there is a
14 request so that we can become the agency that
15 really supports all of the students in New
16 York State and all of the teachers and
17 administrators in New York State.

18 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you. Thank
19 you.

20 I'd like to switch now to final cost
21 reports for capital projects. And as you
22 know so well as commissioner, when capital
23 projects are completed by school districts,
24 the districts are required to file these

1 final cost reports with the department so
2 that the project can be closed out.

3 And there have been times when, due to
4 school district staff turnover or the
5 department has said that the final cost
6 reports have been lost or final cost reports
7 have not been submitted or they've been
8 submitted late, basically what happens is, as
9 a result, school districts have faced
10 considerable state aid recoveries by the
11 department that wreak havoc on the school
12 district.

13 And I've had a few that I've had to
14 deal with from my Senate district. And one
15 stands out, for example; there was a recovery
16 by the department that was 30 percent of that
17 school district's entire annual budget.

18 So it's been a problem. And current
19 law requires the department to withhold state
20 aid if a final cost report is not received
21 within 18 months after SED approval. So can
22 you tell us the current status and the number
23 of school districts that the department is
24 aware of that face similar recoveries, and

1 the amount of those recoveries?

2 COMMISSIONER ELIA: We'll have to get
3 that data to you. I don't have --

4 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: It would be
5 helpful. And I didn't think that you may
6 that at your ready today.

7 COMMISSIONER ELIA: We have lots of
8 numbers here, but I just don't have that one.

9 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: But I wanted to
10 publicly raise it.

11 And also I was hoping that maybe the
12 department could consider some kind of early
13 warning system through state aid management
14 systems so that the information on critical
15 deadlines for filing these cost reports is
16 readily available to the districts, because
17 that's been an issue and it's contributed to
18 the problem.

19 I also just wanted to ask one more
20 thing. Something came to my attention that's
21 in the Executive proposal. And currently
22 State Ed is responsible for developing RFPs
23 and executing grants for pre-K programs. And
24 the Executive proposal creates the Empire

1 State Pre-Kindergarten Grant Board to develop
2 and award grants for all pre-K programs going
3 forward. And the board will be comprised
4 of three members, one recommended by the
5 Executive, will be appointed by the
6 Executive.

7 No office or employee, member of the
8 school district or Education Department will
9 be eligible to serve on the board. And the
10 staff of the Office of Children and Family
11 Services will serve as staff for the board.

12 So this proposal would effectively
13 move the RFP development and grant process
14 from State Ed to the Office of Children and
15 Family Services. Am I not correct in that
16 assessment?

17 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Yes.

18 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Could you explain
19 that?

20 COMMISSIONER ELIA: It's difficult to
21 explain. I believe that we should have all
22 the work that's done on pre-K programs -- and
23 remember, pre-K is pre-kindergarten, so you
24 know just by the title that it should be

1 connected to the kindergarten programs. And
2 so here we go from a pre-K program into a
3 kindergarten program, and they are
4 disconnected.

5 And I think one of the critical things
6 that we have learned and should have learned
7 is that we need to connect what's happening
8 with our students and that we know that when
9 we are preparing a child to be successful in
10 kindergarten, we know what's happening in
11 pre-K.

12 To move the Education Department out
13 of that realm I do not think is productive,
14 and I think in fact it is a destructive thing
15 for students and for their programming. And
16 it's very important that we not silo. Just
17 like we wouldn't want it to be in businesses,
18 we want everyone to be cooperative, to work
19 together, to make sure that we can get the
20 end result that we want -- which is student
21 outcomes in this case. Connecting things to
22 each other is very critical.

23 And if you have a program that is
24 administered in another area, has no

1 connection to the education system you have
2 in New York, then I would say that that
3 program is not as productive nor will it ever
4 be as productive and you are making a
5 decision that would hurt students.

6 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you.

7 I was wondering about the genesis of
8 this proposal. Has the department had any
9 issues with developing RFPs or awarding the
10 grants in the past?

11 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Not that I know
12 of.

13 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Okay. So your
14 strong recommendation is that the Legislature
15 should reject this proposal and keep all of
16 the education together, is that what you're
17 saying?

18 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Yes. A very
19 strong recommendation.

20 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Very strong.

21 Thank you very much, Commissioner. I
22 really appreciate it.

23 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you very
24 much, Senator.

1 We're going to take a 10-minute break.
2 And there are about seven people more, and
3 I'm going to cut you all back to five
4 minutes. And no one else can get on line.
5 And the reason I'm doing it is because there
6 are people who have been waiting for too
7 long. We'll be in the middle of the night
8 again.

9 (Brief recess taken from 12:15 to
10 12:30 p.m.)

11 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: We've been joined
12 by Assemblywoman Hyndman.

13 Assemblywoman Arroyo.

14 ASSEMBLYWOMAN ARROYO: Thank you very
15 much.

16 I'm going to stand up because I want
17 to see clearly all my colleagues here.

18 Commissioner, I'm so proud of you.
19 Listening to you is a learning process that
20 doesn't stop. Congratulations, and thank you
21 for the great work that you are doing.

22 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Thank you.

23 ASSEMBLYWOMAN ARROYO: As chair of the
24 Subcommittee on Bilingual Education, we have

1 met several times in terms of the crisis that
2 exists in the State of New York teaching
3 those students that doesn't speak English.
4 The problem is going up every year, and every
5 year more and more students that doesn't
6 speak English arrive to the State of New
7 York. And we have to provide for them.

8 The Assembly and the Senate of the
9 state provide the Department of Education a
10 grant that is called "bilingual categorical
11 funds" to help to enhance those areas in
12 bilingual education that are in need.

13 This year, as the crisis has expanded
14 to so many areas in the state, we are
15 requesting to put in the budget \$20 million
16 to enhance the program. But there is a
17 categorical -- the categorical funds have
18 rules and regulations that you cannot hire
19 teachers from that money. I would like to
20 work with you, with my colleagues in the
21 Senate and in the Assembly, not only to
22 enlarge the project to \$20 million, but to
23 change those rules so that your department
24 can be able to help those communities that

1 are in need.

2 Because when I speak to my colleagues
3 about the problems that they are having all
4 over this state -- in the City of New York,
5 where the chancellor had killed the bilingual
6 education program -- we have to work together
7 to help those areas and those schools that
8 are in need of services for those students
9 that are coming here.

10 And I would like to respectfully ask
11 you for some assistance. We can sit down, we
12 can create a committee between the -- enhance
13 my subcommittee from the Senate and the
14 Assembly to work together, because I think
15 that is teamwork that is going to be
16 necessary. At the same time, between us, my
17 colleagues and the Senate, we will be
18 requesting \$20 million this year. Your
19 budget had been 14.7. We want to enlarge
20 that money to \$20 million, because there's a
21 need for it.

22 I have made an assessment, and
23 sometimes, you know, you have to see how many
24 children we are leaving behind because they

1 don't speak English. Some of the problems
2 that we have in the City of New York is that
3 they are placing children that doesn't speak
4 English in a special education program. And
5 we have to work together to work to the roots
6 of the problem. We know that those that
7 doesn't enhance bilingual education are
8 adding violation to the federal law that have
9 a mandate to provide bilingual education to
10 those students that are sitting in our
11 classrooms that cannot speak the language.

12 And when we speak about bilingual
13 education, there's so many languages that we
14 have to cover. And I know that you have a
15 problem. I'm willing to work with you, with
16 the Senate, the Assembly, the Speaker and the
17 Governor, to make sure that we put the money
18 where the money belongs, and in the hands of
19 the people that can really address the
20 problem.

21 Thank you for your work. Thank you to
22 my colleagues. And we are here to assist
23 you.

24 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Thank you very

1 much.

2 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Senator?

3 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you. I'd
4 like to note that we have been joined by
5 Senator Michael Nozzolio. And also Senator
6 Diane Savino has been here for quite a
7 lengthy time but just had nowhere to sit. So
8 thank you for being here.

9 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Assemblyman Murray.

10 ASSEMBLYMAN MURRAY: Thank you,
11 Mr. Chairman.

12 And, Commissioner, thank you for being
13 here and for all of your very informative
14 answers.

15 I just have one issue that I want to
16 broach right now, and that is the Title I
17 funding from the federal government. And the
18 recent letters that came out from the federal
19 government threatening to withhold this
20 funding from schools who don't meet the 95
21 percent criteria regarding testing.

22 I've received quite a few phone calls
23 -- superintendents, teachers, but mostly
24 parents. First let me say I think it's

1 absolutely unconscionable that any government
2 agency would threaten to withhold tax dollars
3 from schools, from parents, as a form of
4 punishment for parents doing what they think
5 is best for their children. So they're
6 actually putting parents in a position where
7 they say if we're doing what we think is best
8 for our children, we could be hurting our
9 children. I think that's absolutely
10 terrible.

11 But the calls that I'm getting -- and
12 I'd like to get your opinion on this. The
13 phone calls I'm getting is from parents who
14 are saying "Why are we doing these tests this
15 year?" And I lay this out because the tests
16 that are currently going to be administered
17 are still the Pearson tests, but they're
18 going to be tweaked, I believe; right?

19 COMMISSIONER ELIA: They are questions
20 that would have been developed with the prior
21 firm. They are being reviewed by teachers in
22 New York State for the form of the question,
23 and the passages are being reviewed, and the
24 questions and the tests are all being

1 shortened so that there are fewer questions
2 in English language arts and mathematics
3 Grades 3 through 8.

4 So it's not the same length, it's not
5 the same -- it may be the same, similar
6 questions coming from a pool of questions,
7 but it is not the same test. And it's all
8 being reviewed by New York State teachers.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN MURRAY: Okay. Well, the
10 point I'm getting at is the tests -- the
11 tests currently will not be used for teacher
12 evaluations, which I agree with; they won't
13 be used for the promotion of students, as far
14 as their grades and their scores. So the
15 parents are saying, Why are our kids being
16 used as guinea pigs right now, with the
17 threat of us losing funding if they don't
18 take these tests?

19 Because we're going to move on from
20 Pearson to Questar, I believe is going to be
21 the new vendor.

22 COMMISSIONER ELIA: We've already
23 moved to Questar.

24 ASSEMBLYMAN MURRAY: Okay. Now, are

1 they a private company?

2 COMMISSIONER ELIA: They're a testing
3 firm, yes.

4 ASSEMBLYMAN MURRAY: Right. So my
5 point is that if they're a for-profit company
6 that does this for a living, wouldn't they
7 already do their quality control, if you
8 will, or work with us over the next four
9 years as we're trying to make these tests
10 better -- wouldn't they do that without using
11 these kids as unpaid guinea pigs? And that's
12 what the parents are asking. That's what
13 they're feeling like right now: Why are my
14 kids sitting through this this year and doing
15 this when it has no effect on the teachers,
16 no effect on the students' grades? And yet,
17 again, we're going to be punished if we do
18 what we think is best in pulling these kids
19 out of these tests and opting out; we'll be
20 punished with not getting federal funds.

21 Which, by the way, the Title I funding
22 goes to, for the most part, the neediest of
23 schools.

24 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Absolutely.

1 ASSEMBLYMAN MURRAY: So we're going to
2 punish those that need it the most for
3 parents doing what they think is right. I'd
4 like to get your feelings on that.

5 And by the way, that threat was made
6 last year and was not carried out, so many
7 are wondering: Is this an idle threat, or
8 where are we going with this?

9 COMMISSIONER ELIA: So let me put it
10 in perspective.

11 We have been having tests in New York
12 State that would give us information about
13 where a student is in general knowledge for
14 years. Across the country we've had tests.
15 And we in New York have a long history of
16 Regents exams developed by teachers.

17 So there is an assessment that is
18 required by the federal government. That is
19 the 3 through 8 assessment. I think it's
20 important for you to realize that the
21 assessments are used. And we have to make
22 sure that they're used appropriately. And
23 we, in regards to having the pressure taken
24 off of the assessments as tools in the

1 evaluation of teachers, we've taken that
2 pressure off.

3 But let me give you an example. I'm a
4 principal at an elementary school, and I have
5 five fifth grades. And I give the assessment
6 in mathematics. And I realize, when those
7 assessments come back, we have a problem in
8 mathematics across the board. One teacher,
9 however, seems to be doing a really good job
10 in getting their kids through that
11 assessment, and the kids, as they take the
12 assessments, are showing that they are able
13 to do mathematics better than the other four
14 fifth-grade classrooms.

15 So I'm a principal and I look at that
16 data and I say, okay, let's find out what
17 that teacher is doing. Because she obviously
18 or he obviously has the system down, he's
19 working with these kids, and pretty much the
20 classes are even across the board. So I'm
21 doing something right in this one classroom.
22 How can I take that information, that data
23 that would only come if I had had an
24 assessment, how can I take that data and use

1 use the assessment information to develop the
2 kind of curriculum that needs to be done. If
3 I'm a principal in a school, I look across
4 the board and say, Okay, how did all my
5 students do in English language arts and
6 mathematics? I make decisions about the
7 staff development that I provide in the
8 summer, after school, and opportunities that
9 I put teachers together in teams -- I make
10 those decisions based on the data I have off
11 that assessment.

12 So assessment across the board can be
13 very relevant. And since we have unplugged
14 the teacher evaluation, which was identified
15 by people in my travels everywhere as being a
16 big issue, we've taken that off the page. We
17 are working with teachers, really following
18 the guidelines of what's necessary from the
19 federal government, but also something that
20 is in fact a very productive thing for
21 teachers and for principals and
22 administrators to use.

23 So I would suggest that as you're
24 talking to people who say that their child is

1 a guinea pig, that's not the case. We do get
2 information about children and what we need
3 to do to support teachers to get better every
4 day from the assessment.

5 We have a job -- and this was
6 something that we were criticized for -- and
7 that is getting the data back to schools in a
8 timely way. Well, if people are going to use
9 the data, they want it in a timely way, and
10 we know that. We've already instituted some
11 things to move that up. In this past year,
12 right after I came, we moved it up by almost
13 a month. So if nobody was using the data,
14 why would anybody say "I don't get it in a
15 timely way"? They are using the data, they
16 need to use the data, and it can inform them
17 on what they need to do to improve their
18 school or their classroom.

19 So it's very important for us to have
20 that information, and it helps us on an
21 individual student level to know who's doing
22 really well and who needs some help, and it
23 helps us with teachers and with schools.

24 ASSEMBLYMAN MURRAY: I think we could

1 go on, but my time is up. I would just say
2 that the parents have said that we would hope
3 that assessments are being done on much more
4 of a broad level than just this testing. And
5 I think it is.

6 But I thank you for your answer. And
7 if you could give some guidance to the
8 parents as far as this threat of funding,
9 that would be great. Thank you very much.

10 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you.

11 Assemblyman Lopez.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN LOPEZ: Thank you,
13 Chairman.

14 And thank you, Commissioner. You've
15 been very poised and very thoughtful with
16 your engagement with us today.

17 I want to hit one item quickly; I know
18 we have a short time frame. Certainly we all
19 acknowledge we've been in free fall with
20 education -- from the recession, Gap
21 Elimination, Race to the Top, APPR, Common
22 Core, it's been an endless list. And our
23 schools have been under siege.

24 But the basic premise that I want to

1 get back to is the underlying premise and
2 really the clarion call that we've heard that
3 came from the Campaign for Fiscal Equity for
4 a sound, basic education for all students.
5 And my region, very similar to the Senator's
6 region, Senator Young's region, is primarily
7 rural, and we have many small school
8 districts that are in part of the Appalachian
9 Regional Commission territory.

10 And so the challenge that I'm asking
11 you for some guidance on is we have a call
12 for quality education; my concern is that all
13 schools, as you know, are not created equal.
14 We have many schools that don't have distance
15 learning, we have many schools that don't
16 have the richness of AP courses. We have
17 Foundation Aid, which everyone drives at as
18 the basis for equity, if you would, between
19 schools, other than these categorical aid
20 supplements.

21 I'm just asking for your thought, do
22 we have a real handle on what each school can
23 provide and the mix of aid that should be
24 going to them to ensure that every student

1 has equal opportunity to AP classes, to
2 technology, to all the things that may be
3 enjoyed in more affluent school districts?
4 Sound, basic education -- do we have an
5 operative definition, and do we have an
6 inventory where schools fall short of that
7 operative definition?

8 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Well, let me point
9 out we are very concerned -- the Regents
10 proposal, if you've seen it, calls for an
11 increase in the Foundation Aid, a substantial
12 increase in Foundation Aid, because we're
13 very focused on making sure that all schools
14 have the ability and the opportunities that
15 are necessary to provide that great education
16 for every kid.

17 We have some things that we've already
18 talked about -- so the virtual learning and
19 those things that could open up opportunities
20 for rural school districts and, as a matter
21 of fact, some of the urban school districts,
22 as they look at how they can program and
23 provide opportunities for their kids. I
24 don't think there's any question that there

1 are schools with high needs in New York State
2 that are in tough straits right now, and this
3 needs to be addressed in the Foundation Aid.

4 ASSEMBLYMAN LOPEZ: So with that said,
5 again, we've had a number of critics -- Rick
6 Timbs being one of the chief ones, with the
7 School Financial Officers Association, and
8 he's pointed out flaws in Foundation Aid. Do
9 you feel that there's any ability or
10 willingness -- it's like opening Pandora's
11 box, I understand -- to really focus on --
12 we're not interested, really, in giving money
13 to all schools when, in this specific
14 instance, when there are some schools that
15 are not even on an equal footing with the
16 peers.

17 And so I'm getting back to the issue
18 of how do we equalize within the Foundation
19 Aid framework, recognizing that Foundation
20 Aid alone may not be the answer?

21 COMMISSIONER ELIA: So on page 3 we
22 have proposed -- the Regents state aid
23 proposal is there, identifying for Foundation
24 Aid, for the GEA restoration and

1 expense-based.

2 But I would suggest to you -- Regent
3 Tallon is on our Regents Board; he's been
4 very, very proactive in working with the
5 Regents on the development of their budget
6 and the budget process. And he has talked
7 about the fact that in previous years there
8 have been reviews of how you might change the
9 Foundation Aid. As you well know, that's not
10 an easy process. But it may in fact be
11 something that the Legislature chooses to
12 look at.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN LOPEZ: Thank you.

14 And I'll just shift real quickly, a
15 couple of seconds here, back to APPR. And I
16 know the ball's in your court in that regard.
17 My wife is a special ed teacher, and I have a
18 brother who's a teacher, a sister-in-law.
19 One of the issues that's come up is within
20 the APPR assessment of teachers, are we going
21 to give any weight to the limitations of a
22 teacher to address what you talked about with
23 the parental involvement -- issues of
24 poverty, drug abuse, domestic violence,

1 absenteeism? Is that going to be weighed or
2 reflected in the new APPR regime?

3 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Well, so it's
4 interesting, when you look at the formula
5 that was in place -- that we will be
6 reviewing, obviously, if we decide to move
7 forward on a growth model. But I will tell
8 you that there are factors that were
9 included, like the poverty level of the
10 students, like the attendance rate of the
11 students, things like that, that certainly
12 would have been in effect.

13 I want to say that there are many,
14 many places across this state where we have
15 parents that have needs, that are working two
16 jobs and don't have the opportunities that
17 other parents might have to put in the time
18 for connections all the time to schools. We
19 need to do whatever we can and work with our
20 districts across the state to facilitate
21 building those relationships, which is why I
22 want to bring it back to the request that we
23 have for developing a community and parent
24 connection through an office in the SED to do

1 to ask a question.

2 SENATOR NOZZOLIO: Good afternoon,
3 Commissioner.

4 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Good afternoon.

5 SENATOR NOZZOLIO: I've read your
6 testimony, I've listened to the questions and
7 especially your answers, both on the video as
8 well as here in person. You've addressed
9 many issues of extremely serious note, and I
10 continue to press you to do what you're doing
11 and continue communicating with the
12 Legislature how you're doing it, what you
13 need to do to make things better.

14 This issue that I'm going to present
15 in very brief format is one that has nothing
16 to do with the very cosmic and important
17 issues discussed this morning and this
18 afternoon. It deals, though, with a very
19 personal question to many individuals,
20 individual students, often whose future rests
21 in the balance. And it has nothing to do
22 with academics, but it has everything to do
23 with scholastic participation in
24 extracurricular activities, particularly

1 athletics. That I don't believe I would have
2 gone to the college I went to if it wasn't
3 for scholastic sports. Athletics are
4 important to me, and important to students,
5 and I believe a wonderful educational tool
6 for young women and young men. And I believe
7 those opportunities need to be expanded.

8 Upstate New York, the place where
9 you're from, where you taught, particularly
10 the more rural areas of upstate, have a
11 tremendous challenge -- to meet the
12 requirements of Title IX, to meet the
13 mandates generally of budgets and school
14 districts. We found many school districts
15 cooperating with each other and having joint
16 athletic teams from a variety of districts,
17 joint athletic participation, particularly in
18 the sports of swimming, indoor track, the
19 kinds of things that require a great deal of
20 cost to develop the infrastructure.

21 How can you expand scholastic athletic
22 opportunity for those students, particularly,
23 who don't have those opportunities, with
24 adjoining school districts and create more of

1 a cooperative spirit and, if necessary, a way
2 to fund that spirit so that school districts
3 could more readily join with each other to
4 provide those opportunities?

5 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Well, let me
6 preface my comments with saying that in my
7 experience, athletics is a key part of
8 success for many of the students in schools
9 across this country, and we need to, as
10 educators, provide those things. It's
11 like -- it's kind of the same parallel that
12 you could draw for arts programs or if you
13 had drama programs. Kids have different
14 interests, and what hooks them to school and
15 activities that are productive are really
16 critical.

17 I had the opportunity in the last week
18 to meet with the athletic organization here
19 in the state. We talked about ways that
20 we're going to work together to support each
21 other to make sure that our kids and our
22 schools and districts take advantage of
23 whatever ways that we can to join together
24 resources and make that work.

1 I particularly am aware of some of the
2 school districts in Western New York where
3 the difficulty of just getting to places
4 where you're going to have your meets or your
5 games or your play is going to be difficult.
6 And as you said, infrastructure is something
7 that's very expensive. To add that now is
8 not realistic. But to join together I think
9 is, and I'm very anxious to work with the
10 organizations that represent our athletic
11 programs to make sure that happens.

12 SENATOR NOZZOLIO: Appreciate that
13 attention. Is there anything specific that
14 you know of, that your office is cooking up,
15 that you want to put on the horizon that we
16 could move more closer to reality today?

17 COMMISSIONER ELIA: So I don't have
18 any specifics today. I had my first meeting
19 with the organization a week and a half ago,
20 and we've already talked about some things
21 that are going to occur. We will be joining
22 with them to provide scholarships for the
23 athletes across the state that have shown
24 particular prowess in their sport, and we're

1 going to be part of that scenario with them.
2 And they've talked about the way that they're
3 going to organize meets, and we can be, I'm
4 sure, very connected to that.

5 SENATOR NOZZOLIO: Incentive funding
6 in particular for cooperation, collaboration,
7 allowing -- please put that on your laundry
8 list.

9 COMMISSIONER ELIA: We will look at
10 that.

11 SENATOR NOZZOLIO: And let us know how
12 we can work together to achieve those
13 objectives.

14 COMMISSIONER ELIA: We'll do it.

15 SENATOR NOZZOLIO: Thank you.

16 COMMISSIONER ELIA: You're welcome.

17 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you, Senator.

18 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you very
19 much.

20 Next, Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton.

21 ASSEMBLYWOMAN LIFTON: Thank you very
22 much. Good, we're in the afternoon,
23 Commissioner.

24 I'm going to be -- I could talk to you

1 for an hour or two, I'm sure all of us could,
2 but you're going to be rivaling Hillary
3 Clinton's testimony to the Benghazi committee
4 if we keep going, so I'm going to -- I hope
5 you found it much friendlier questioning. So
6 I'm going to try to be very brief, and I will
7 only ask for as brief an answer as you want
8 to give me.

9 The questions end up being very
10 fragmented here, so just to be very clear,
11 we're delaying the teacher evaluation
12 requirement until 2019, but schools are being
13 asked to give the teacher evaluation system
14 now in order to get state aid this year.
15 What is it exactly that we're asking the
16 school districts to give to the state?

17 COMMISSIONER ELIA: So we just put out
18 guidance to the districts across the state
19 related to the regulation that was passed by
20 the Regents. What that basically does is
21 allow us, as you pointed out, to unplug the
22 teacher evaluation component that's based on
23 the growth score in the 3 through 8
24 assessments, and for principals the growth

1 score at the high schools. And it won't go
2 into place until the '19-'20 school year,
3 which really won't be until 2020.

4 And so I think that's an important
5 component. And what that basically does is
6 allow school districts then to use other
7 opportunities to use assessments to do the
8 evaluations. We are downplaying and
9 indicating that it's not necessary across the
10 board to develop new assessments, we don't
11 want that to be the proliferation of the --
12 in the results of this.

13 But we are telling districts -- and
14 many of them are being very creative in
15 working together with their teachers on
16 what's an appropriate way to include student
17 work into their assessments.

18 ASSEMBLYWOMAN LIFTON: Thank you very
19 much.

20 And maybe this has been somewhat
21 covered too, but again, to be clear, the
22 Governor's -- was it a commission or a task
23 force? I've gotten confused about the labels
24 that were put on things.

1 COMMISSIONER ELIA: It was a
2 Governor's task force.

3 ASSEMBLYWOMAN LIFTON: -- task force
4 wrapped up their work and gave you a bunch of
5 tests to do, if I'm not mistaken -- 21, is
6 that correct, Commissioner?

7 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Yes.

8 ASSEMBLYWOMAN LIFTON: And including
9 this, I guess, comprehensive review of the
10 Common Core and all the pieces of that as one
11 of the main tasks you have in front of you.

12 But am I understanding correctly that
13 there's no money in the Governor's proposal
14 to help you with any of these 21 tasks that
15 you've been given to do?

16 COMMISSIONER ELIA: That's correct.

17 So it's a review of the Common Core
18 standards, that's one of the strong
19 recommendations from the committee. Senator
20 Marcellino and Assemblywoman Nolan were on
21 the committee as chairs of Education --

22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN LIFTON: If I can
23 interrupt you, can you just take -- in two
24 sentences, tell me what that means for the

1 SED, what that means for you in terms of
2 working on that? Is it just a few people
3 sitting in an office just looking things
4 over, or what does that mean for you? And
5 what does that entail for you as a task?
6 Just as briefly as you can.

7 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Sure. The
8 particular task of reviewing the standards is
9 a very comprehensive thing. And so let me
10 point out to you, one of the reasons that
11 there was a -- I believe there was push-back
12 on the higher standards in New York was
13 because there wasn't a widespread involvement
14 of stakeholders, particularly including
15 practitioners and teachers.

16 And so we don't want to make that
17 mistake again, we want to do this correctly.
18 We want to have it be very involved with
19 those stakeholder groups, including parents,
20 teachers, administrators. We certainly want
21 experts from our university. I had the
22 opportunity yesterday to talk to the
23 president of Cornell; she has some staff
24 members that specialize in early childhood.

1 We need to have a group of people who are
2 involved in this work review those standards
3 and make recommendations to us so that we can
4 put in place the standards for New York State
5 that will get our students where they need to
6 be.

7 It should not be an easy process. It
8 should be very involved. And it should
9 require much involvement from outside groups
10 and be transparent. We all like that word,
11 we use it a lot, a lot of people use it with
12 us, but it really has meaning. And if people
13 know what you're doing, then there will be
14 less push-back when that recommendation
15 finally gets to the Regents for adoption.

16 So it is a complicated process, and
17 that's only one of the processes that was
18 recommended by the commission. We also have
19 much work to do on curriculum, to support
20 teachers.

21 I would say one of the major things,
22 which was Recommendation No. 9, was to
23 provide staff development consistently across
24 the State of New York. We had funding that

1 went out in competitive grants, so people got
2 grants and they did a really good job and
3 they trained their teachers, and in those
4 places you have pockets of great work being
5 done on higher standards. But you have many
6 districts that didn't get the grant, didn't
7 get the money, and weren't part of that
8 process, and there's not consistency.

9 And we expect our teachers to do this
10 for our kids, they want to do it, but we
11 don't give them the support that they need to
12 be able to do it. And it is a critical task
13 that we have in front of us. And I will tell
14 you, as an educator for 45 years, I don't
15 want to do it wrong. So it's an important
16 thing for us to be very purposeful about the
17 work that we do, and it does take resources.

18 ASSEMBLYWOMAN LIFTON: Thank you,
19 Commissioner, for your very thorough answers.
20 I'm not getting to my question about -- and
21 I'm going to pass to my colleagues here, but
22 maybe we can discuss -- I realize it's not
23 quite in your bailiwick, maybe higher ed more
24 than -- but I'm sure you're interested in the

1 edTPA issues and what's happening with
2 teachers and training. I'm hearing still
3 great concerns about young people being
4 discouraged from continuing their careers in
5 teaching.

6 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Well, I think we
7 have a big job certainly here, but in the
8 nation, to turn around the rhetoric on
9 teachers. Nothing is going to happen in a
10 classroom across this country, no matter what
11 kind of school you're in, if you don't have
12 good teachers. And we need to make sure that
13 we develop the great teachers here, in
14 cooperation with SUNY and CUNY and all of the
15 independents, and everybody that produces
16 teachers, but we also need to make sure that
17 once they get in the job, that we support
18 them and help them forward.

19 ASSEMBLYWOMAN LIFTON: Thank you very
20 much, Commissioner.

21 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you very
23 much.

24 Assemblyman Titone, to close.

1 ASSEMBLYMAN TITONE: Good afternoon,
2 Commissioner. Thank you for being here.

3 And let me be the first to tell you
4 that I have horrible penmanship, but I do not
5 blame you or the State of New York for that.

6 (Laughter.)

7 COMMISSIONER ELIA: I have really
8 wonderful penmanship --

9 (Laughter.)

10 ASSEMBLYMAN TITONE: We'll talk
11 further.

12 COMMISSIONER ELIA: -- and I say that
13 my teacher helped me.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN TITONE: We will talk
15 further.

16 A little bit earlier you had mentioned
17 something, and I have to say it kind of got
18 under my collar. And I'm looking through
19 your presentation -- and I'm happy to say,
20 you know, at page 32 you have the Museum
21 Education Act. And just a full disclosure,
22 that's being carried by me, and I'm told that
23 Senator Little just picked up the bill, which
24 I think is a great start.

1 But reading through your report, quite
2 frankly, you know, if we took, every time in
3 this where it says pre-K, and substituted
4 arts in education, I would be sitting here
5 smiling ear to ear thanking you up and down.
6 And, you know, one of the problems I think
7 that we've had -- and I've been doing this
8 speech for nine years now, and I'm still
9 getting the same reaction. And here's what's
10 upsetting me, is that we had a brief
11 discussion about athletics. And, you know, I
12 don't want to put one against the other;
13 however, there are well over 220 studies now
14 internationally that demonstrate when you
15 take arts in education seriously, rather than
16 as after-school frivolous fun, children do
17 better.

18 When we talk about STEM, you know, you
19 look to Japan, you look to all the other
20 countries that are really where we can learn,
21 each one of those countries that do better in
22 science, technology, engineering and math all
23 take arts in education very, very seriously.
24 It is part of the curriculum. It is not

1 something that is optional, and it's not
2 looked at as something, well, my child likes
3 this or doesn't like that.

4 What we're learning, the studies that
5 we're seeing lately with sports, athletics,
6 is that, well, some of them actually may
7 cause brain damage. So putting one into the
8 other kind of gets under my collar, because
9 they're not the same. It's not something
10 that should be taken lightly as an
11 after-school time-filler. It is something
12 that's very real, and the studies are there.
13 In fact, there are more studies that support
14 arts in education than do universal pre-K.
15 Fact. I'm not making this up and, you know,
16 the educators are not making this up.

17 So my question, Commissioner, is in
18 the State of New York, where are we with arts
19 in education? I can point to schools not
20 only in my district but throughout this state
21 that will have brand-new music equipment
22 sitting in a closet because there are no
23 music teachers. So where are we with arts in
24 education?

1 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Well, I can give
2 you an update on a commission that Regent
3 Tilles has begun. Are you familiar with
4 that?

5 ASSEMBLYMAN TITONE: Absolutely.

6 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Okay, so he has
7 been working very --

8 ASSEMBLYMAN TITONE: Roger and I have
9 been working on that very closely together.

10 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Right. So he's
11 been working and we have already moved
12 forward so that we are expanding the options
13 in the 4+1 category, so it's a Pathway for
14 Graduation.

15 We're also -- and are working after
16 this year, because this year we're putting in
17 the opportunities for those assessments that
18 can be used instead of a Regents exam
19 relative to the arts. But we also are moving
20 forward on developing an arts curriculum.
21 Have you been to those meetings with the
22 committee? Because they've been talking
23 about doing a sequence that actually starts
24 in pre-K and goes all the way through 12.

1 And then a student would end up with an arts
2 kind of diploma.

3 So those are all things that have been
4 part of our program. And I will never pit
5 the arts against athletics. I do think that
6 every child should have art. And I am in
7 favor of, in fact, art being with a
8 specialist in a classroom, whether it's
9 kindergarten, whether it's fifth, eighth, or
10 ninth.

11 ASSEMBLYMAN TITONE: Right. Right.
12 And it has to move away from the mindset, the
13 culture that we've created, you know, that
14 it's a class trip to a museum and then that's
15 it. Because then what's happened is the
16 school district will think that by scheduling
17 that trip -- and then there's snow, so the
18 trip doesn't happen, but they still think,
19 well, we tried. And nothing has happened.

20 So my point is, Commissioner, and it's
21 something that I really would like you to
22 explore further, is that you could go
23 district to district, school by school, and
24 it's treated differently. It's viewed

1 differently.

2 COMMISSIONER ELIA: I agree.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN TITONE: And that's why I
4 really say, when I look at your report, if we
5 substituted the term "pre-K" with "arts in
6 education," I would be a very happy camper.

7 Thank you, Commissioner.

8 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you very,
9 very much, Commissioner. It's been a
10 wonderful time listening to you, especially
11 there's the question you could have easily
12 said "Oh, I'm new, I'll get back to you."
13 We'd have been out of here quicker, but --

14 (Laughter.)

15 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: -- I'm glad what
16 you did. You gave us a great answer on
17 everything. So I'm really glad to have you
18 join us.

19 Senator?

20 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Yes, you gave a
21 wonderful presentation today and knew all the
22 numbers. Appreciate the fact that you
23 addressed our questions in the best way that
24 you could and gave great answers, and also

1 that you are willing to get back, to go
2 further in depth on some of the questions
3 that need more attention. So thank you so
4 much for being here today.

5 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you.

6 COMMISSIONER ELIA: Thank you, I
7 appreciate it. I have one final comment I'd
8 like to make. And I used to say this when I
9 was running large organizations in schools.
10 If when you're making decisions you made a
11 decision that you know is the right one for
12 children, then we'll all be together.

13 So appreciate the work that you do,
14 appreciate the difficult tasks that you have.
15 And if you think about the children in your
16 life and what you would like them to have,
17 that's where we all want to be.

18 Thank you.

19 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you,
20 Commissioner.

21 I do want to point out that we've been
22 joined by Senator Phil Boyle.

23 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: We've been joined
24 by Assemblywoman Seawright and Assemblyman

1 Abinanti.

2 For those who are in their offices
3 upstairs, we are now going to have Carmen
4 Fariña, chancellor from the New York City
5 Department of Education.

6 One hour from this moment, I will be
7 closing off the list to ask questions, one
8 hour from now. Which is at -- the time is
9 now 1:10. At 2:10, we will close down.

10 We've also been joined by Assemblyman
11 Felix Ortiz.

12 Good afternoon.

13 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Good afternoon.

14 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Good afternoon.

15 CHANCELLOR FARINA: It's a pleasure to
16 be here.

17 I would have asked all of you to wear
18 your college something, but I'll explain why.

19 Good morning, Ways and Means Chair
20 Farrell, Finance Chair Young, Education
21 Committee Chairs Nolan and Marcellino,
22 New York City Education Subcommittee Chair
23 Felder, and all the members of the Assembly
24 and State Senate here today. Thank you for

1 this opportunity to testify on Governor
2 Cuomo's proposed 2016-2017 Executive Budget.

3 And I also want to say a special
4 thanks to Commissioner MaryEllen Elia, who
5 has been an unbelievable partner as we go
6 forward. And it was a pleasure to listen to
7 her testimony today.

8 On behalf of our city's over 1 million
9 public school students, I thank you for all
10 your support for all of the great initiatives
11 we have been able to accomplish in the past
12 year. You are all partners in our work.
13 Whether it's the nearly 70,000 children now
14 enrolled in free, full-day, high-quality
15 pre-K, the creation of new and expanded dual
16 language and transitional bilingual education
17 programs, or the 22,000 middle and high
18 school students now receiving arts education,
19 we simply could not have done any of these
20 things without you and your leadership.

21 Today in New York City, we are
22 celebrating College Awareness Day. As you
23 can see, I have brought my undergraduate cap,
24 and in many New York City public schools,

1 teachers and administrators are wearing their
2 college gear too. We want every student to
3 know the hard work, determination and skills
4 it takes to be on the path to college and the
5 work force. In support of this goal, and in
6 order to lay this groundwork as early as
7 possible, we started College Awareness Day.

8 The idea to start this celebration
9 highlighting the importance of college came
10 after I visited a class of pre-K students and
11 found that none of them knew what the word
12 "college" meant. The aim of College
13 Awareness Day is to embed the college
14 conversation at every grade level in all our
15 schools. It is important for students and
16 families to understand that their dream of
17 college is attainable and need not be
18 compromised by financial considerations,
19 geographical barriers, or any other
20 obstacles.

21 It is also important to recognize that
22 college readiness is not simply an academic
23 endeavor but a social-emotional one. In
24 addition to a high-quality education, our

1 students need confidence and drive to carry
2 them towards their goal of attending and
3 graduating from college.

4 I'm the first in my family to graduate
5 from college, and as my video that went
6 citywide today also states, I had to work and
7 raise two children while going to graduate
8 school. So I'm very proud to say I actually
9 have four degrees. But for many of our
10 students, just simply understanding that this
11 is attainable and it shouldn't be part of
12 economics, what neighborhood you live in, or
13 what family you come from.

14 So all over the city we -- one school
15 has the principal, who must have graduated
16 from Syracuse University, the entire school
17 is wearing Syracuse University t-shirts and
18 talking about what it means to go to college.

19 A few months ago, speaking in front of
20 hundreds of parents and educators, Mayor de
21 Blasio laid out new reforms to achieve equity
22 and excellence across all New York City
23 public schools. These initiatives bolster
24 the vision the mayor and I have of a school

1 system that begins earlier to give students a
2 solid foundation, makes rigorous and
3 challenging courses the norm, ensures
4 students master critical skills on time, and
5 invests in a path to college or career for
6 every New York City public school student.

7 I would like to take this opportunity
8 to share what our administration has
9 accomplished for our students since the last
10 time I had a chance to give testimony.

11 With the \$300 million the state
12 invested last year -- and I want to be clear
13 that education is an investment. It is not
14 money wasted, it is not money put in as
15 charity. It means that you're putting money
16 up front so we don't have to spend it later
17 on in things that are negative to society --
18 we were able to enroll a record 68,547
19 children in free, full-day, high-quality
20 pre-K, nearly 50,000 more students than were
21 enrolled before Mayor de Blasio took office.
22 These students are now getting a crucial year
23 of problem solving and vocabulary building
24 that will put them on the path to long-term

1 success.

2 When I visit schools, I always ask to
3 drop in on at least one pre-K, and I cannot
4 tell you the pleasure I get from seeing
5 students making independent decisions,
6 talking to each other and, yes, making a
7 little bit of noise. For too long, many of
8 our classrooms have totally silent, and in
9 silence, no one learns.

10 We know quality is the key to a
11 successful expansion, and I am committed to
12 ensuring that every pre-K program throughout
13 the city continues to provide an important
14 foundation for academic achievement. In
15 order to ensure that every student has access
16 to a high-quality program, the city assessed
17 Pre-K for All programs using two rigorous,
18 research-based, nationally recognized tools:
19 the Classroom Assessment Scoring System and
20 the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale.
21 New York City's new program scores are on par
22 with other nationally recognized model pre-K
23 programs.

24 Pre-K in New York City is not daycare,

1 it's really laying the foundations of a
2 strong educational path to college.

3 Data released earlier this month
4 showed a strong increase in our city's
5 graduation rates and college-readiness
6 indicators, as well as a decrease in the
7 dropout rate. The graduation rate was over
8 70 percent for the first time in the city's
9 history. These gains are a testament to the
10 hard work by New York City students and
11 teachers and administrators, who deliver
12 high-quality instruction from the moment
13 students enter pre-K to the day they graduate
14 high school.

15 I was particularly pleased to see a
16 decrease in the dropout rate across all
17 ethnicities -- critical progress, but there
18 is still much more to be done. We will
19 continue to be laser-focused on strengthening
20 instruction, expanding opportunities for all
21 students, and engaging families to ensure
22 there is a clear path to college or a
23 meaningful career for all city students.

24 Today, in addition to the teachers

1 celebrating the colleges they graduated from
2 and talking about how hard it was for many of
3 them to get to college, we're having forums
4 around the city for all parents to talk about
5 their role in getting students to college,
6 financial assistance in getting to college,
7 and also how to look at all the transcripts
8 that your students bring so that many of our
9 students are more aware of what they need to
10 be able to be on that path.

11 In order to provide every student and
12 every school with critical tools to prepare
13 students for success in college and the
14 workforce, and in order to make New York City
15 the best urban school district in the nation,
16 the mayor and I have pledged to meet rigorous
17 benchmarks: 80 percent of our students will
18 graduate from high school on time, and
19 two-thirds of them will be truly
20 college-ready.

21 To meet these targets, Mayor de Blasio
22 and I are committed to providing every
23 student and every school with critical tools
24 to prepare students for success in college

1 and careers, from providing every student
2 with computer science classes in elementary,
3 middle and high school to ensuring all
4 students are reading in second grade and on
5 track to take algebra by ninth grade.

6 One of the tools that we're using in
7 this particular area is to ensure that
8 there's more advanced math programs available
9 in fifth grade, before these students even
10 get into middle school. And that is really
11 one of the things we're working on,
12 particularly in the summer.

13 The city is also redoubling its
14 efforts around college-readiness and access
15 as part of the mayor's agenda for Equity and
16 Excellence across all schools, with College
17 Access for All, AP for All, and the new SAT
18 School Day.

19 One of the things, when I visited
20 schools in the last few months, is that I met
21 with several high school students who had not
22 taken the SATs, and I asked them why not.
23 And it was very interesting, but many of the
24 students said to me that because they were

1 held on Saturdays and many of them either had
2 jobs or family responsibilities, they
3 couldn't do it.

4 And the other issue that came up was
5 that many of them, the SAT courses were given
6 in schools outside the immediate
7 neighborhoods. And knowing what I know about
8 the geography in New York, sometimes you
9 don't live within a 10-block radius.

10 So by having SATs during the school
11 day, free for every student in New York City
12 high schools, we're going to ensure that they
13 all have that opportunity, but we'll also be
14 able to access and assess who are the kids
15 that we should be pushing further on a
16 regular basis. So this is something that is
17 really unique. This will be the first year
18 coming forth.

19 Through College Access for All, every
20 student will have the resources and supports
21 at their high school to pursue a path to
22 college. Through AP for All, every high
23 school student will have access to a range of
24 advanced placement courses. One of the

1 things with the advanced placement courses
2 that is unique, because so many of our high
3 schools are collocated in big schools -- and
4 many of your Queens representatives know
5 that -- if you have five high schools in one
6 building, they will all have different AP
7 courses. But students can take courses in
8 each other's schools within the collocated
9 buildings. And we've already started moving
10 in that direction, and going to visit
11 someone's schools, we experiment. Some of
12 them have already started, but we'll be doing
13 a lot more of that.

14 As part of our work to increase
15 college-readiness and access by meeting the
16 whole needs of every student, New York City
17 is committed to creating and sustaining
18 community schools. Over the past two years,
19 we have created and funded 130 new community
20 schools.

21 Community schools are customized to a
22 community's unique set of needs, and they
23 create opportunities available for students,
24 families, and communities, including expanded

1 learning time, school-based health clinics,
2 mental health programs, dropout prevention
3 strategies, parent engagement programs, and
4 adult education opportunities. These
5 resources are embedded during the school day
6 as well as outside the school day.

7 I'll give you an example of one of our
8 community schools. A middle school in Harlem
9 has two separate community-based
10 organizations working with them. One of them
11 works during the school day on
12 social-emotional needs. They are there with
13 social workers, guidance counselors, and all
14 kinds of extra support for the students and
15 the teachers.

16 And another organization works on
17 academic mentoring and tutoring based on the
18 student's needs.

19 So you have two separate CBOs working
20 in the school all day. The same CBOs are
21 monitoring student attendance and, before the
22 summer ended, knocking on parents' doors and
23 making sure that every child that was
24 registered to come to that school actually

1 Education has also rolled out many new
2 initiatives, including a new streamlined
3 accountability system to best support
4 schools, which aligns the responsibilities of
5 supervising and supporting schools with the
6 superintendents. The reforms created clear
7 lines of authority in our school system.
8 Additionally, superintendents must now have
9 at least 10 years of pedagogical experience,
10 including at least three as a principal.

11 I have 44 outstanding superintendents,
12 and these superintendents know the names of
13 every principal in their district, the
14 accountability structures that they must
15 meet, and also are now working on making sure
16 that the professional development of
17 principals and assistant principals is tied
18 into their needs.

19 We in New York City are very proud of
20 the fact that we have one of the most
21 productive and really intelligent workforces,
22 and without that, we can never move forward.

23 New geographically based Borough Field
24 Support Centers provide integrated supports

1 to schools across areas of instruction,
2 operations and student services, including
3 health resources and counseling, support to
4 students with disabilities, and support to
5 English language learners.

6 Just last month we provided a service
7 that's going to be handled in the borough
8 support office, where parents can get
9 translations on any issues 24/7, including --
10 well, obviously including after 5 o'clock.
11 You can pick up the phone and someone -- a
12 live person, not a machine -- will help you
13 with any kind of translation you need, and
14 will be able to be available to you also on
15 Saturdays and Sundays, and it's in the 10
16 major languages of New York City.

17 A redoubled focus on parent engagement
18 run by our new executive superintendent,
19 Yolanda Torres. We believe in the importance
20 of strong family-community ties for student
21 achievement, we've invested in training,
22 providing increased professional development
23 for parent coordinators, parent leaders,
24 family support coordinators and family

1 leadership coordinators.

2 I continue to do Town Hall meetings
3 throughout the whole city, and by now I must
4 have amassed at least 50 Town Hall meetings
5 where parents actually ask questions and get
6 answers on the spot. And if I don't have an
7 answer, someone literally calls them on the
8 phone within a week. And if I call them
9 myself, they hang up because they really
10 don't think it's the chancellor calling, so I
11 have to call a second time, saying "It's
12 really me, could you listen?"

13 A new investment of \$23 million in
14 arts education funding allowed us to hire 300
15 new arts teachers and resulted in 22,000 more
16 students receiving arts education.

17 Because I have been a big advocate of
18 arts education all my life, many more private
19 funders are coming to the table. And just so
20 you know -- and please don't be jealous on
21 this one -- the producers of Hamilton have
22 given us 20,000 seats for 11th-graders in
23 New York City. We are filling the halls at
24 Hamilton. Luis Miranda just came to speak to

1 my staff. And one of the things that's also
2 happening, with money from the Rockefeller
3 Foundation, every student who comes has to be
4 from a Title I school. They are going to
5 have professional development done by Gil
6 Dulerma {ph}, so they won't just come cold to
7 see a performance, because I don't believe in
8 one-shot deals. And they will have to read
9 something on Hamilton.

10 If any of you haven't seen Hamilton,
11 do whatever you need to do to do it, because
12 it is one of the most phenomenal things I've
13 ever seen.

14 This week actually I was with the
15 Governor at a performance at a theater where
16 the Arthur Miller Foundation, first time
17 ever, gave us money to actually start theater
18 arts programs in 15 new high schools. And
19 part of that money is going to go to become
20 experts on Arthur Miller's plays.

21 And once again, Hamilton was
22 outstanding in one way; Death of a Salesman,
23 to me, is the quintessential play about the
24 human condition.

1 And to me, having that foundation work
2 with our schools, and 15 of our high schools
3 that did not have a theater arts program to
4 have it, to me is pretty amazing.

5 Forty new dual-language programs and
6 more being developed to give students the
7 bilingual and bicultural skills they need to
8 succeed, and a model dual-language program
9 that will foster collaborative practices
10 among dual-language educators, elevate the
11 quality of programs across the city, and
12 provide support and guidance to staff
13 interested in opening programs.

14 We now have in New York City this
15 year, for the first time, a Polish
16 dual-language program, Japanese dual-language
17 program, we have a program that's been
18 advocated for German dual-language. To me,
19 if New York City doesn't understand the
20 importance of two languages and
21 multi-cultures, who else can?

22 So for me, speaking two languages has
23 been a blessing. I see it as a total asset,
24 and I'd love to give that opportunity to

1 every child in New York City.

2 To share strong practices, we created
3 two important programs: Learning Partners
4 and Showcase Schools. Together, these two
5 initiatives demonstrate a commitment to
6 professional development and collaboration
7 among educators and schools that foster
8 student learning and school improvement.
9 When I see schools excelling in a particular
10 area, I want them to share their secrets, not
11 hide them.

12 For example, we will be hosting 17
13 superintendents from across the country to
14 show them how to improve schools. And
15 improving schools to me is not simplistic,
16 but it can be simple: Looking for excellence
17 wherever it exists, and having other people
18 come and visit and ask questions.

19 I went to a Showcase School yesterday
20 that is moving from being a Title I school to
21 non-Title I, that is in the middle of
22 gentrification. And having that principal
23 explain to about 30 other principals in the
24 room about how he did it and what struggles

1 he had and what you should be thinking about,
2 is much better than anyone publishing a book
3 or a chapter and saying "Here, read this."
4 Seeing the best of the best and then being
5 able to ask those people questions is how you
6 make change.

7 Expansion of language access services
8 through new field language access
9 coordinators at the borough field offices,
10 who will ensure that schools are providing
11 parents with limited English proficiency
12 access to translations and also translations
13 at all our public meetings.

14 And finally, approximately 220 new
15 athletic teams, providing access to
16 interschool athletics to an additional
17 3,000 students, the majority of which are for
18 small schools and for girls' teams.

19 Last week, Mayor de Blasio presented
20 the fiscal 2017 preliminary budget that made
21 targeted investments in our city's public
22 schools, such as \$868 million in capital to
23 reduce school overcrowding through 11,800 new
24 seats, which would bring the total current

1 capital plan to over 44,000 new seats. We
2 are making a commitment in our fiscal year
3 2017 budget that with any additional state
4 aid, we will raise the Fair Student Funding
5 at all schools to at least 87 percent, a
6 vision of both Ray's and mine, ensuring a
7 citywide average of 91 percent, which would
8 be an unprecedented investment of
9 \$159 million in fiscal year '17 that will
10 provide vital education resources to students
11 in historically underfunded schools.

12 Ensuring that every student has an
13 equitable and excellent education is at the
14 very core of my vision of public education.
15 I've seen our schools evolve over the years,
16 and I know these are the right ingredients
17 for transformative change, but none of these
18 new initiatives would have been possible
19 without your leadership and support.

20 That said, I would be remiss if I did
21 not address the state aid that New York City
22 schools are owed from the 2006 settlement of
23 the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit.
24 Since 2009, the state has not met the

1 court-ordered obligation to the city from our
2 Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit. In this
3 school year alone, New York City public
4 school students will be shortchanged some
5 \$2 billion in state education funds. I am
6 confident you will agree that it is time to
7 make a significant down payment on this
8 obligation by fulfilling a commitment and
9 making equity in education a priority.

10 As I sit before you today, I am
11 thinking of the message of College Awareness
12 Day. College readiness starts in pre-K. It
13 is up to us to provide these students with
14 the opportunity not only to think about
15 college but to also envision themselves as
16 college students who will have successful
17 futures.

18 To that end, I ask for the full
19 support of the State Legislature for the
20 continuance of mayoral control in New York
21 City. I have seen firsthand the
22 extraordinary difference mayoral control has
23 made in our ability to move our school system
24 forward and put students on a path to college

1 and the workforce.

2 Having been an educator for 50 years,
3 I have seen all kinds of systems come and go.
4 I worked under school boards, I worked under
5 a regional superintendency, and I will tell
6 you that bureaucracies do harm education.
7 And being able to work hand in hand with a
8 mayor whose philosophy I share and agree with
9 has made it much easier to do the kind of
10 work that we are able to do in New York City.

11 It doesn't take going through
12 channels -- and sometimes, yes, but a lot of
13 the times what we believe in goes forward. I
14 would never have taken this job if I was not
15 going to have a mayor who's going to have my
16 back and I wasn't going to have his. And to
17 me, that is a crucial part of mayoral
18 control.

19 Providing free, full-day, high-quality
20 pre-K to every 4-year-old, creating
21 aggressive turnaround plans for our
22 struggling schools, and expanding community
23 schools are just a few examples of reforms
24 that were only possible because the mayor has

1 direct responsibility for our schools. After
2 more than a decade, we know New York City
3 schools do better when the mayor has direct
4 authority and accountability. Our students
5 can't go back to a system of patronage, of
6 favorites, and of some places getting more
7 than others. When I talk about equity, it's
8 about the kids in the Bronx and the kids in
9 Brooklyn, the kids from Park Slope and the
10 kids from Harlem having access to the same
11 professional development, the same excellent
12 teachers and the same excellent principals as
13 everywhere else in the city.

14 I look forward to working with the
15 State Legislature and the Governor on the
16 proposals outlined in the Executive Budget,
17 and stand prepared to do everything I can to
18 help. We have laid the foundation, we are on
19 the right path; we need your support to
20 continue moving forward.

21 I also want to say that to the degree
22 we've learned some lessons in the past two
23 years, we're also happy to share. And I
24 invite anyone who wants to come and see some

1 of the work we're doing. A lot more to do,
2 but we're very proud of what we've done.

3 Thank you for the opportunity to
4 testify before you. I am happy to answer any
5 questions you may have.

6 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you very
7 much.

8 To begin, Assemblywoman Nolan.

9 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NOLAN: Thank you,
10 Mr. Farrell. And thank you, colleagues.

11 I want to publicly thank Chancellor
12 Fariña for the work that she's done. And the
13 wonderful testimony today was really
14 comprehensive, and the breadth and the depth
15 of the work you've done in two years. And I
16 do want to say your work in going to every
17 one of the Community Education Councils --
18 multiple times at this point -- has really
19 turned parental support for mayoral control
20 in a very positive way, because people are
21 seeing you and they're getting answers. As
22 you said, there's not multiple layers as
23 there were in the old school board days when
24 you could never get a straight answer to a

1 question.

2 So your work and your commitment to
3 traveling throughout the city has been really
4 exemplary. And, you know, I wish I had your
5 energy, because you're always out. I've
6 toured schools with you, and it's my favorite
7 thing because you always get there so early
8 and you have that great way about you that,
9 you know, everybody shapes up when they see
10 the chancellor's there.

11 I do want to say, though, we'd like to
12 get your thoughts on the community school
13 model. I already asked Commissioner Elia.
14 Has the money arrived? Is it -- you know, it
15 has been subjected to some criticism that
16 it's not going to improve academic
17 achievement. I'd like you to perhaps respond
18 to that criticism.

19 And then just one other issue near and
20 dear to my heart, I was a little disappointed
21 not to see it, we have asked every year since
22 I've chaired this committee, so your
23 predecessors as well, there are over 10,000
24 children in our city who go to school in

1 trailers. And they're substandard.

2 You know, there was recently a report
3 issued about disability accessibility in the
4 New York City schools. Well, none of the
5 trailers are accessible, that's for sure.

6 And I know that President Lorraine
7 Grillo from the School Construction Authority
8 is not here today. We don't usually have her
9 testify at this hearing. But you know and
10 she knows that this is a priority for me and
11 for many members from the city. So maybe you
12 could just start with that and then talk a
13 little bit about the community schools.

14 And two other topics that I didn't see
15 really addressed: CTE education is becoming
16 very important here in the Legislature, and a
17 real recognition with some new committee
18 members of work on that. And then adult ed,
19 though it's not often understood, it is
20 really also in your purview, and we
21 continually look at the issues of the GED and
22 things like that. But we can always talk
23 about that another time if we're not prepared
24 to today.

1 CHANCELLOR FARINA: No, absolutely.
2 Happy to talk about all of them. You know,
3 we just can put so much in a speech, but I'm
4 really happy to answer them.

5 The TCUs have been a big priority and
6 there is a tremendous amount of money in the
7 budget to remove them. And we have actually
8 started removing them, I think we removed at
9 least 80 by now already, and we're in the
10 process -- 70, and we're in the process of --

11 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NOLAN: Do you want to
12 introduce the gentleman with you? Maybe he
13 can --

14 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Oh, I'm sorry,
15 this is Ray Orlando, our chief financial
16 officer.

17 CFO ORLANDO: Good afternoon.

18 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NOLAN: Another person
19 with a thankless task. Maybe he wants to
20 address it, certainly.

21 CHANCELLOR FARINA: I think the TCUs
22 is certainly something we're trying to do.
23 But just as an example, when we remove TCUs,
24 we've got to place those children somewhere.

1 So for example in District 24, PS 19, which
2 is one of the most overcrowded schools in the
3 city, it was a matter of making sure we had
4 community input as to where those children
5 would go. So as we removed the TCUs -- we're
6 building an annex, actually, in that
7 schoolyard, so we thought we had a solution,
8 and the community thought differently. So it
9 was a matter of getting everybody on board
10 and deciding where we're going to be putting
11 some of those children meanwhile.

12 So we came up with a very good
13 solution, the community's happy, we're happy.
14 And I think that's part of it: When we
15 remove TCUs, where do we put them? Where do
16 the kids go? And if there's enough room in
17 the school -- like Richmond Hill was another
18 one that we had to change minds based on
19 community input. So it's going to happen, we
20 are looking at it. We have one right now in
21 Brooklyn that we have to remove the TCUs, but
22 where the students go while we do that is one
23 of the concerns.

24 But the specific numbers on TCUs?

1 CFO ORLANDO: Sure. Since -- over the
2 last two years we've removed 70 TCUs and have
3 plans to remove another 100. There's
4 \$450 million in the capital plan for removal
5 of the TCUs including a planned \$100 million
6 from the Smart Schools Bond Act that you all
7 had a role in. So thank you for that.

8 CHANCELLOR FARINA: I'm glad you
9 brought up the CTE. It is a passion of mine;
10 I know it's a passion of yours, Cathy. We
11 are increasing our CTEs, but the first thing
12 we have to do, career and technology
13 education, we have to make sure that the
14 programs that we're increasing are really the
15 careers of the future.

16 We still have some programs that we're
17 not preparing them for the day of today. So
18 what we're trying to do, rather than create
19 more CTE schools, is create CTE programs
20 within schools. I know Senator Montgomery,
21 particularly interested in Maritime, and
22 we've talked about it. It makes sense.
23 New York City is an island surrounded by
24 water; why not more careers that will give us

1 scuba divers, that will give us fishery.

2 And so we're looking very carefully at
3 what are the right careers. And now we have,
4 as part of our Showcase, CTE schools that we
5 think are extraordinarily. I just went to
6 visit Hillcrest High School, and he actually
7 has a need -- he has one of the best nursing
8 programs in school. And yet -- and we're
9 going to need your help in this -- we cannot
10 get the licensing because there's state
11 legislative laws on who can teach, who's not
12 a teacher.

13 So if you're going to have nursing
14 being taught by nurses and pharmacy being
15 taught by pharmacists, we need certain
16 changes. So we're going to come to you for
17 help on that. I've discussed that
18 extensively with MaryEllen because I know
19 this is a passion of hers as well.

20 So a lot of it is what are the right
21 career paths, where do we put them, and where
22 do we get the teachers. The teachers are a
23 big issue because they have to be -- you
24 know, if you're making millions of dollars as

1 a computer scientist, do you want to come and
2 work on the school level? Well, we have to
3 make it attractive enough so they will.

4 So yes, I do want to see more CTEs. I
5 want to see programs within schools. We're
6 also looking at CTE programs that will
7 enhance programs such as Rikers Island.
8 We're looking at incarcerated youth can come
9 back -- if they have a career path they can
10 follow, that this will make a lot more sense.
11 So that's another place.

12 One of the things you talked about was
13 adult education. Adult education -- I
14 actually went to visit all the adult
15 education centers in the city. Once again,
16 the bulk of the adult education is about GED,
17 ESL. They are asking for other programs, and
18 we're looking to see -- asking them what they
19 want more of. We have an adult education
20 superintendent who actually has classes
21 throughout the city. But we're also looking
22 to do a lot more of the adult programming
23 district-wide and borough-wide through our
24 parent coordinators.

1 One of the interesting -- I thought
2 was interesting -- demands that parents have,
3 because we've asked parents what do you want,
4 rather than us assume we know, they want
5 cooking classes, they want nutrition classes,
6 they want Zumba classes. They want things
7 that are going to improve their own health or
8 their own ability to be parents. So we're
9 trying to do that, and we're encouraging
10 schools, particularly community schools, to
11 do more of workshops with parents in things
12 that they want.

13 Community schools, I want to be very
14 clear. There are certain things that are not
15 negotiable in all community schools. All
16 community schools must have extended learning
17 time. They must all have an additional hour
18 of academic learning with a wraparound of
19 other services such as health services,
20 mental health services, clinics, things that
21 will improve their health so that also
22 attendance rises. The one thing that we see
23 universally in all the renewal schools is
24 attendance, that it has to improve, it has to

1 get better. We need to have a culture of
2 going to school is important. So that's
3 universal.

4 What differs from school to school is
5 that we've asked the schools to choose their
6 partners. So RFPs went out, and you can
7 choose to work with the Good Shepherd or
8 Partnership with Children or Citizens Union
9 or Children's Aid Society. But you have to
10 interview to make sure that the CBO partner
11 that you chose was one that would be
12 complementary to the needs of your specific
13 school. And you didn't have to have one
14 partner all day, you could split it up, you
15 could have two partners.

16 And I think that's what we're actually
17 evaluating now. And I know the UFT, the CSA
18 and I are working very closely on the
19 community schools together. I know this
20 weekend there's going to be a retreat that
21 the UFT is sponsoring, and it's all about how
22 do we keep the energy high.

23 We also have created, in many of these
24 schools, what we call master principals,

1 principals who have shown extraordinary work,
2 so that they in many cases will be working in
3 two schools, and model teachers. Because
4 obviously a challenge in a community school
5 or renewal schools in particular is how do
6 you recruit teachers. So we're looking for
7 many ways to get the best teachers to come
8 into these schools, and partially it's by
9 making teacher leaders, which get a little
10 bit extra money but also open their
11 classrooms for other teachers to learn from.

12 We also have, in many of these
13 schools, new leaders, about 36 new leaders in
14 our 94 community schools.

15 So we are trying everything and
16 anything, and the reality is we have
17 committed to closures where necessary, very
18 limited -- this year only three, and that may
19 be it -- mergers and consolidations. Mergers
20 means that if you have two schools in a
21 building and they're under a hundred
22 students, which many of our schools are, if
23 we bring them together, they can have more
24 resources. So we're trying lots of different

1 things. We certainly should know by June
2 some of the things that are working.

3 One school alone, the principal, in
4 the Bronx, decided to departmentalize her
5 fourth and fifth grade, which is something
6 very unusual in elementary school, and she's
7 showing results. So I send people there to
8 learn from her about something they may want
9 to try.

10 So part of it is innovating in
11 different schools, what works, what doesn't
12 work, so we can move it to another school.

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NOLAN: Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you very
15 much.

16 Senator?

17 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you very
18 much.

19 And I'd like to welcome you,
20 Chancellor, to Albany today. And it's great
21 to have these types of important discussions
22 and exchanges, and I want to thank you for
23 that.

24 Our first speaker will be Senator Carl

1 Marcellino, who is chair of the Senate
2 Education Committee.

3 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Good afternoon.
4 It's good to see you with an NYU hat on. You
5 well know that is my alma mater as well, and
6 I believe it's also the mayor's.

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NOLAN: It's mine too.
8 Mine too.

9 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Cathy, it's yours
10 too. You see? NYU forever.

11 (Laughter.)

12 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Do we know what
13 the symbol for NYU is? We were the Violets.
14 Can you imagine going to a basketball game
15 and rooting for the Fighting Violets? That
16 was a problem from day one. We overcame.
17 The school is a great school, and I'm glad to
18 see it's being honored, and all the other
19 colleges. I like the idea that you talked
20 about.

21 But you mentioned the status of
22 teachers and their licensing. When I taught
23 in the city, I remember we always had a
24 problem -- this is back, you know, carrying

1 heavy stone tablets, things like that. It
2 was not easy. But the getting teachers
3 licensed to teach in the basic subject
4 areas -- I'm not talking about nursing or
5 some of the more exotics that you want to
6 bring in now, but I'm talking about the
7 basics -- how are you finding it to get
8 teachers to teach in basic subject areas in
9 the city?

10 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Right now, in the
11 basic subject areas, it is not that much of a
12 problem. However, the areas that are
13 problematic are English language learners,
14 ESL teachers and special needs teachers.

15 We have been working certainly through
16 the Teaching Fellows. This year we had over
17 a thousand Teaching Fellows, the primary
18 numbers all going to these two categories,
19 but also asking our universities to work
20 harder with us to make sure they're
21 graduating more people with these licenses.
22 I've even met with SUNY, not just CUNY, to
23 see if there was a partnership that we could
24 have with them to ensure that these teachers

1 come ready to work in the classrooms.

2 The other thing we're experimenting
3 with in New York City is an apprenticeship
4 model where teachers actually get paid --
5 not, you know, the going rate, but in their
6 final year, so they actually work almost like
7 assistant teachers in their final year of
8 teacher certification.

9 I would say the other thing, and this
10 is only now because of the extra money that
11 we're putting into the arts education, we are
12 finally going to have a need for more arts
13 educators. For a while, there were no jobs
14 for arts educators. So, for example, we're
15 encouraging what just happened, Hunter
16 College and Lincoln Center are going to start
17 working on certification for music teachers
18 together, the same way that the Museum of
19 Natural History works on certification for
20 science teachers with the university.

21 So we need to get more creative in how
22 we certify our teachers in hard-to-staff
23 areas. Math is actually going to be -- now
24 that we're going to move to algebra at a

1 younger age, we need many more algebra
2 teachers. So we're putting a lot more
3 investment in summer training for our own
4 teachers. We've increased our own
5 professional development in the city, and
6 we'll be coming out shortly with looking at
7 how we can upgrade paraprofessionals who
8 might be ready to work in some of these
9 areas.

10 So there's a lot of things we're
11 doing, because this is going to be something
12 going forward that is going to be a
13 challenge. But certainly English language
14 learners and special needs is really, really
15 a hard-to-staff area.

16 SENATOR MARCELLINO: The Governor put
17 in, for mayoral control, an increase to three
18 years. The last time the Legislature had
19 acted, we gave the mayor a year. It's my
20 understanding the Assembly is talking about
21 increasing the three years to possibly seven.
22 Why should we give the mayor more than a
23 year?

24 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Because I think,

1 based on the track record of what we've
2 accomplished in one year, imagine what we
3 could accomplish in seven. And imagine the
4 energy that we can put into getting the
5 schools and --

6 SENATOR MARCELLINO: If I could just
7 interrupt you, he may not be there for seven.
8 And I'm not suggesting he's going to lose his
9 next election; I don't want to get into that.
10 But the point is, in the seven years, you've
11 got a four-year term, he may not serve a
12 second term. By choice or for whatever
13 reason.

14 So you may get a mayor you're not too
15 happy with, yet you're stuck with him.

16 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, that's
17 politics with a capital P, so I'm going to
18 let you guys argue that among yourselves.
19 I'm just saying that from the point of view
20 of a chancellor, being able to work with a
21 mayor who has my back and who understands
22 philosophically where I'm coming from, makes
23 a major difference.

24 So in terms of the amount of years, I

1 can't imagine anyone running for mayor at any
2 time who's not going to want mayoral control.
3 But right now, under this mayor, I feel very
4 comfortable that we're moving in the right
5 direction.

6 SENATOR MARCELLINO: The mayor has a
7 program for -- a renewal school program.
8 What's the current stage of implementation of
9 this renewal school program?

10 CHANCELLOR FARINA: The renewal
11 school?

12 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Yeah. And are
13 there any schools destined for closure?

14 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Yes, there are.
15 In fact, it was at the PEP meeting I was at
16 this month, two of the three that we're
17 closing are renewal schools. And in both
18 cases the schools are just too small. I
19 mean, we had a school with 37 students. We
20 had a school with 97 students. You can't
21 have a guidance counselor, you can't have
22 arts in any of these schools that are too
23 small to function.

24 So we're looking at schools in many

1 different ways. It's not just scores, it's
2 about what makes sense and what schools can
3 provide the services that schools are meant
4 to do. So yes, we are closing, we're
5 merging, we're consolidating. There's not
6 one thing that we're doing across the board,
7 there are many things, depending on the
8 school.

9 And again, to me, one of the most
10 important things is having a good leader, if
11 a school has a good principal. But then
12 after having a good leader and then having
13 good teachers, you need the resources. You
14 cannot run a high school with 125 students.

15 So just -- you know, there's a word I
16 like to use a lot, although it's not always
17 in practice as much as I'd like it: Common
18 sense. This is not about being punitive,
19 this is not about -- it's just does it have
20 common sense to have a school with 120 and
21 make it a high school?

22 So this is the kind of thing that
23 we're talking about. And that's why I think
24 having strong superintendents who are making

1 these analyses on -- you know, after visiting
2 a school, seeing a school. Why I'm also
3 encouraging collocated sites to share
4 resources, so that together you can do a lot
5 of things that individually you can't do. So
6 every option is on the table, but closing is
7 the last thing we do, because we have
8 hope that schools with certain numbers can
9 produce better results.

10 SENATOR MARCELLINO: What would be the
11 typical load for a guidance counselor in one
12 of your high schools?

13 CHANCELLOR FARINA: A typical what?

14 SENATOR MARCELLINO: The number of
15 students they have to service.

16 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, I would say
17 right now in a high school -- depending on
18 the size, because our schools vary in size so
19 dramatically -- in high-need areas we would
20 call -- and the mayor has a program that
21 we're putting in place in September, the
22 Shepherd Program, one guidance counselor or
23 social worker to 100 students. And it's not
24 because they're going to service them all at

1 one time, but they're going to follow those
2 students over an amount of years, so that
3 you're going to have this one person who's
4 going to know you well, know your family,
5 know your issues, and is going to follow you
6 over the course from sixth grade to
7 12th grade.

8 It's also a reason why we're
9 encouraging a lot more mentoring and
10 internships for our students. Many of our
11 students do not have an adult consistently in
12 their lives, and we need to have more adults
13 who come and visit you -- just knowing you
14 have special attention from someone is very
15 important. Particularly, you know, we've
16 done a lot of work on our male-only
17 initiative, our Brother's Keeper. Who are
18 the people who can come and be that support
19 service for you? And I think that's one of
20 the things that we're trying to do.

21 In the community schools we have
22 emphasized social workers, because social
23 workers also can do home visits, they can do
24 something that not all our guidance

1 counselors are doing. Although we're
2 encouraging guidance counselors to do home
3 visits as well in what we call our MSQI
4 schools.

5 I do believe support, family support
6 is crucial, and it does not have to do
7 necessarily with socioeconomic -- all
8 students deserve support, across the city,
9 where it's a very fast-paced society that we
10 live in.

11 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Just to jump to a
12 different type of situation, what's the
13 relationship between STEM and STEAM in the
14 city schools?

15 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, STEAM has A,
16 for arts, and STEM has really more of a focus
17 on science.

18 But I want to be clear that it's not
19 an add-on to the curriculum. If you were to
20 visit our summer programs, which are very
21 heavily STEAM-based, or even in pre-K, you
22 will see kids playing with LEGOs. LEGOs is
23 STEAM. You're building something, you're
24 thinking it through, you're trying to figure

1 out how do these parts fit together.

2 Robotics, second-grade robotics -- I
3 went to visit a class on Staten Island, all
4 the second-graders are doing robotics. And
5 they have to think about, how is this going
6 to move, does this need a motor, doesn't it
7 need a motor? That's STEM. Mathematics is
8 also part of STEM because you have to figure
9 out, using the Smart Board or an iPad, how do
10 you take an example and then turn it into
11 some kind of a figure. I was in a middle
12 school where the teachers and the kids were
13 using Smart Boards to teach math examples.

14 So STEM doesn't have to be -- or let
15 me put it this way. The last thing STEM
16 really is is more computer rooms in schools.
17 It's about how you use your iPads, your --
18 even your cellphones in the classroom for
19 everything that you need.

20 So that's part of it. But I do agree,
21 and I think -- and the Governor said this the
22 other night at the theater, that if we move
23 so much to technology and we forget that the
24 heart and soul is about the arts, then we've

1 lost something. We need to have both. We
2 need to make sure -- a lot of our arts now
3 are done through STEM. If you can see some
4 of the graphic arts work that I've seen in
5 some of our high schools, they have computers
6 but they're thinking like artists.

7 So I don't think it has to be one or
8 the other. But I do think it's a challenge
9 for us in terms of teacher professional
10 development. If I have to say there's one
11 thing that we really have stressed in the
12 last year, it's how do we look at
13 professional development for teachers so that
14 they can take the new tools that maybe
15 someone like me -- I still have to ask my
16 9-year-old grandson to help me with a lot of
17 technology.

18 So one of the things we've done is
19 we've asked outside corporations, we're
20 working heavily with Microsoft, we're working
21 with other companies that will tell us how to
22 work with our teachers. So there's a lot to
23 STEM that requires outside support, and we've
24 been very fortunate to get a lot of that.

1 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you very
2 much.

3 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you.
4 Assemblyman Cusick.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN CUSICK: Thank you,
6 Mr. Chair.

7 Chancellor, it's good to see you. And
8 I can attest that you are no stranger to
9 Staten Island. And thank you for referencing
10 us --

11 CHANCELLOR FARINA: I was just there
12 yesterday.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN CUSICK: Yes, and I was
14 with you two weeks ago at St. Charles.

15 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Oh, that's right.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN CUSICK: So thank you for
17 being there.

18 I have one budget question and then an
19 off-budget question.

20 The Smart Schools Bond Act, the voters
21 approved it in November. It's a \$2 billion
22 bond statewide. Do you know how much New
23 York City will get from that?

24 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Ray?

1 CFO ORLANDO: \$783 million.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN CUSICK: Okay. And have
3 you put out a plan yet as to what that money
4 will be used for, what type of technologies
5 and --

6 CFO ORLANDO: I --

7 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, I can answer
8 this --

9 ASSEMBLYMAN CUSICK: If you could get
10 back to me --

11 CHANCELLOR FARINA: But I can say
12 also, if we want to be very clear -- and we
13 have now an advisory board for technology.
14 Because technology that's good today is
15 obsolete next week. So we want to make sure
16 that we're not investing money in something
17 that's not going to be current.

18 So one of the groups -- I just met
19 with a whole group of all the top tech
20 companies in New York City, and we have a
21 member of the Fund for New York, who actually
22 runs -- and I just spoke at -- a TED talk for
23 all these companies. And I think we really
24 need to have people who are experts in the

1 field to come in and say to us, this is where
2 you're going to get the most bang for your
3 buck. This is not about buying more stuff,
4 it's about how do you use the stuff you
5 already have.

6 Well, what is the stuff that you have
7 readily at hand? Like the cellphone. One of
8 the things -- I went to Grover Cleveland High
9 School last week, two weeks ago, where
10 there's a company called Y Plan, it's a
11 national company, that does competitions on
12 how to get every high school student to learn
13 how to develop their own apps.

14 And the competition in this particular
15 school was to develop apps in groups of three
16 on how to use Forest Park. Which I had never
17 been to, had never seen, never knew existed.
18 And I was fascinated because one of the
19 groups developed a bird-watching app so that
20 you can actually go through the park and find
21 the birds and then figure out -- I said that
22 I would do, so I wouldn't feel like a total
23 fool trying to figure out what these birds
24 are.

1 But I would love to see a citywide
2 competition, and I'm actually meeting with
3 some people to see if every high school
4 student could be involved in something.
5 Because that is not -- not that it's not a
6 lot of money. But I also went to Girls Who
7 Code. We want to see more coding done in our
8 schools. Coding can be done as young as
9 second grade, but what do you do with it?
10 And how do you make sure that the learnings
11 will then lead to career paths and other
12 kinds of things?

13 So we can get back to you, but it's
14 still a work in progress. And I don't want
15 to do this just with educators at the table,
16 I want to deal with people who know what
17 they're doing and can help us.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN CUSICK: Good. I
19 appreciate that.

20 I have a question also -- as you know,
21 the obesity issue is an issue that spans New
22 York City, whatever district you may be in,
23 and particularly with younger people. And I
24 know there are many programs that New York

1 City schools take part in, whether it's with
2 the New York Roadrunners Club or -- I know we
3 have a summer program that we work with the
4 schools in our district.

5 But I think there's some confusion on
6 parents' end and some conflicting information
7 I get back about physical education classes
8 during school time. There's some parents who
9 tell me that their kids don't have phys ed,
10 and then there are some parents that tell me
11 they do have phys ed.

12 Could you clarify or maybe point me in
13 the right direction on this one?

14 CHANCELLOR FARINA: This comes up a
15 lot when I do my town hall meetings. And the
16 reality is there are regulations on how many
17 minutes per day students should have phys ed.
18 And the reality is that to some degree, it
19 depends on individual schools and the
20 facilities. So most of our schools have
21 gyms, have schoolyards; a few don't. But a
22 lot of the training that we've done in the
23 last few years is to also encourage teachers
24 to do phys ed within their own classrooms,

1 the kind of exercises you do when you're on a
2 plane, so kids can actually do some of the
3 exercises sitting down. We've done tai chi,
4 we've done all kinds of things to make sure
5 that there's more movement.

6 The other reason, and this is why I
7 think parents are asking for things like
8 Zumba classes and aerobics, we want to see
9 more family activities around movement. So
10 we have actually started doing a lot of our
11 family workshops. We now have, in the
12 contract for teachers, 40 minutes a week of
13 parent engagement. And in many of our
14 schools the parent engagement piece is more
15 workshops with parents. And one of the
16 recommended topics is how to do physical
17 exercise.

18 So it's almost a school-by-school
19 decision. And a lot of it is also, in some
20 of our overcrowded schools, how many people
21 can use the gym at the same time. I got an
22 email today from a parent that they always go
23 outside to do their physical exercise, but
24 with snow, where do they go?

1 You know, it's a balancing act. Not
2 that we don't believe it's important. We've
3 also started looking at our parks, local
4 parks, how we could use the parks more for
5 some exercise. But this is an issue.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN CUSICK: And it's your
7 understanding that schools are meeting the
8 requirement of the time, though; right?

9 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Yeah.

10 ASSEMBLYMAN CUSICK: In some way or
11 another.

12 CHANCELLOR FARINA: It's certainly in
13 the guidebooks. I'm not saying -- you know,
14 we have phys ed teachers every year. This
15 year we hired an additional 50 phys ed
16 teachers citywide. So that's certainly one
17 of our missions, is to get those positions
18 filled and also train them so they can do
19 phys ed in multiple ways, not just the old,
20 you know, volleyball and dodgeball.

21 ASSEMBLYMAN CUSICK: Great. Thank
22 you, Chancellor. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

23 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you.

24 Senator?

1 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you very
2 much.

3 Our next speaker is Senator Diane
4 Savino.

5 SENATOR SAVINO: Thank you, Senator
6 Young.

7 Thank you, Chancellor, for your
8 testimony and for your very complete answers.
9 In fact, you've answered many of the
10 questions that I was going to ask you in --

11 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, I'm going to
12 take you with me --

13 SENATOR SAVINO: That's wonderful. I
14 do want to follow up on two areas, though.

15 On the CTE schools, I'm also a big
16 supporter of CTE schools and I will be honest
17 and say that I've gotten text messages from
18 one of my council members, Mark Treyger,
19 who's a former teacher. He's a big supporter
20 of CTE schools. And you touched briefly on
21 one of the issues that we have, which is
22 barriers to getting teachers to become the
23 CTE teachers.

24 What can we do to improve that for

1 you?

2 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, I'm actually
3 going to be writing you a letter, and I mean
4 you a letter, about what I really need done
5 in terms of CTE. CTE cannot be funded as one
6 to one. At one time it was 1.2.

7 Let me give you an example. One of
8 Treyger's schools is Dewey High School.
9 Dewey has a phenomenal culinary arts program,
10 which I'd like to see improved or made
11 bigger. However, think about where do you
12 get the money for all of the food at Long
13 Island City? Phenomenal culinary, but there
14 is no set money to the CTE schools for the
15 materials, the consumables they have.

16 So in the past, CTE programs were
17 given extra money for that. I went to a
18 great school in the Bronx, they're teaching
19 stage crafting. Where does he get the
20 lumber? He has a deal with a lumber company
21 that gives him all the scraps.

22 CTE programs should not be run on
23 scraps. So part of it is what is the funding
24 that's appropriate for the license area to

1 make sure those programs can function over
2 time and not just based on contributions.

3 The other -- and I met with Treyger
4 not too long ago. One of the other things
5 is, you know, if you're looking at science,
6 that has consumables. Grady is one of the
7 schools he's interested in. But you need the
8 consumables for that as well. So how do we
9 put that in there?

10 But this is the one area -- and I
11 certainly would love to work with Senator
12 Marcellino and Assemblywoman Nolan, because
13 this is a passion of mine. I want to see
14 this done so we have alternative paths. I'll
15 give you an example. Sometimes legal gets in
16 the way. We want to start a welding program
17 in one of our schools, maybe two schools.
18 And that actually came out of a visit that we
19 have made to Vocational. And there's all
20 kinds of laws on the books as to why we can't
21 do this or why we have to do it a certain
22 way. So we need to say these are the careers
23 of the future. I met with one of the union
24 leaders who said, I would give union cards

1 if -- I have to import workers from Italy to
2 come here to do welding, particularly in
3 brownstone neighborhoods. It's ridiculous.
4 Those are jobs that we could have.

5 But -- there needs to be changes in
6 the law, but I'm going to be very explicit in
7 what those changes need to be. But you guys
8 are going to have to help us.

9 SENATOR SAVINO: Well, we look forward
10 to it.

11 One of the other issues that is of
12 great concern to those of us in Staten Island
13 and even parts of South Brooklyn is the lack
14 of school seats for children. I know that in
15 the mayor's budget presentation he talked
16 about adding another 11,000 school seats
17 across the city, 800 alone for Staten Island.
18 And that's great, but the question is where
19 would they be, how are we going to accomplish
20 this. And in Staten Island, 800 may not even
21 be enough. You know, we have Tottenville and
22 Curtis High School, two of the most
23 overcrowded schools in the city. They go
24 back and forth depending on which one is more

1 overcrowded than the other. On the north
2 shore we're expecting, as part of the mayor's
3 affordable housing program -- it hasn't been
4 approved yet, but he's looking at parts of,
5 you know, the north shore of Staten Island
6 for development. Our schools there are
7 already overcrowded. PS 13 is at 145 percent
8 capacity -- I know we've discussed this
9 before -- and they're looking to become a K-8
10 school.

11 But we have real needs on Staten
12 Island, and we're not sure where these new
13 school seats are going to go and what role
14 we'll play in helping you develop that plan.

15 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, let me be
16 very clear. The CECs have been actively
17 involved in almost all our new school needs
18 and where they need to be and so forth. I
19 think also what -- as far as Curtis is
20 concerned, there's an annex going to go
21 there, and that is one of the ways that we're
22 going to help relieve that.

23 I think we also have to look at what
24 the word "overcrowding" means. Some schools,

1 overcrowding is when they have 19 children in
2 a class, another school is when they have
3 30-some. So we're trying to balance all
4 that. That's why I visit as many schools as
5 I do, to figure out what can happen and what
6 can be done.

7 I think that getting, you know, all
8 the elected officials with the CECs involved
9 is going to be part of it. In District 13,
10 for example, there's a whole committee now
11 that's going to be working at looking at the
12 district as a whole. It really doesn't make
13 sense -- District 15 as well. We can't look
14 at this one place, we've got to look at the
15 whole district and see where does it make
16 sense. Perhaps it also means moving a
17 school, an entire school, from one place to
18 another. Staten Island, maybe not so much.

19 But those are really big issues, and I
20 certainly wouldn't want to be flippant and
21 say this has an easy solution. But it's
22 certainly one we're very, very conscious of.

23 And I think also every superintendent
24 has been asked to present where they feel the

1 biggest needs are. And also I don't like
2 people to give me problems without some
3 solutions, so they've all been asked to come
4 up with some solutions. So that if you have
5 a school, for example, that may have extra
6 space -- and we have very few of those left
7 in the city -- how do we move this school
8 particularly to this place so that another
9 school that has more kids may have the other
10 space? So it's not an easy thing to do and
11 it requires a lot of community engagement.

12 SENATOR SAVINO: And in South
13 Brooklyn, Chancellor, as you know, many of
14 the schools in Coney Island and Brighton
15 Beach were seriously affected by Sandy, and
16 some of them have not really been repaired.
17 So last week Assemblywoman Pam Harris,
18 Councilman Treyger, Assemblyman Bill Colton
19 and myself, we hosted a meeting with Lorraine
20 Grillo from the School Construction Authority
21 and all the principals of the schools in
22 South Brooklyn to talk about some of the
23 problems they're having with their structural
24 -- the effects of Sandy and some of the other

1 problems of just having old buildings.

2 And, you know, I'm sure you're aware
3 of it, but it is a problem. But, you know,
4 we still have gymnasiums where the floors are
5 buckled and the children can't use them
6 anymore, and it's taking a very long time to
7 replace some of the equipment that was
8 destroyed, and it's having an effect on the
9 schools in that area.

10 CHANCELLOR FARINA: I went to visit
11 Fred Tudda, 188, and I went to visit Dominic
12 D'Angelo just recently, and they were very
13 clear to point out some of the deficits in
14 terms of their buildings.

15 But keep in mind -- and I'm not saying
16 this as an excuse, I'm just saying that one
17 of the things we know is a problem -- we have
18 several schools, many schools in New York
19 City over a hundred years old. And they were
20 constructed differently, they were
21 constructed of concrete at the time, because
22 that was a very good thing. It also creates
23 extra problems for us in terms of how do we
24 repair, particularly when it comes to wiring.

1 we're going to have to take up this year is
2 mayoral control. And the last time we did
3 it, it was rather contentious. I hope it's
4 not going to be as contentious this time.
5 But one of the issues that came up the last
6 time, and I imagine will come up again this
7 time, is the Panel for Educational Policy.
8 There are some of us who believe that the
9 current makeup of the PEP is really nothing
10 more than a staff meeting for the mayor's
11 office.

12 So I'm curious as to what your
13 thoughts are on whether you think we should
14 make changes to the PEP to make it a little
15 bit more independent. And we're not looking
16 to, I think, create problems for the
17 Department of Education, but I think a little
18 bit more input either from parents or
19 educators or elected officials might be a
20 refreshing voice on the Panel for Educational
21 Policy.

22 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, I would say
23 to you that you haven't been at any of our
24 PEP meetings --

1 SENATOR SAVINO: Certainly not.

2 CHANCELLOR FARINA: -- to think these
3 are rubber-stamped people. I think very
4 clearly a lot of them have very strong
5 opinions. I certainly meet with them in
6 small groups, big groups, and so forth, and
7 they have in many cases -- and I know Ray can
8 speak to this -- they have looked at
9 contracts with magnifying glasses and have
10 gotten us to change our minds on things.

11 So I don't think -- and I haven't been
12 here for two administrations. I was at the
13 PEP when they first started. There was a
14 time when you went in and you didn't have to
15 read anything, it was an automatic -- this is
16 not that kind of a PEP.

17 I think also you also have five
18 borough representatives, and they very
19 clearly speak their minds. They certainly
20 speak the minds of the borough presidents,
21 and I think that's very clear. We have
22 also -- we very carefully have members who
23 represent different constituencies. We have
24 someone who's there specifically to support

1 the needs of special needs parents, and Lori
2 speaks her mind on that.

3 So I do think it works well. And I
4 think also you either have mayoral control or
5 you don't. And I think part of our job, and
6 certainly my job, is to make sure that the
7 PEP members have all the information they
8 need, not only to vote but to ask the right
9 questions. And they don't always ask them at
10 a public meeting. We have taken tours of
11 schools with the PEP members. They have
12 asked, especially if there's going to be a
13 collocation site, we take them to visit the
14 school. We've invited them to go to CEC
15 meetings of -- just recently, on the
16 combination of 308 and PS 8.

17 So they are engaged more than I think
18 they have been in the past, and they
19 certainly make their decisions based on more
20 informed -- more information.

21 So I think that the way it stands now,
22 as long as the people who come are smart
23 people who are determined to make their mark,
24 I think we're in a good place.

1 SENATOR SAVINO: Thank you,
2 chancellor. I certainly look forward to
3 continuing to work with you on this issue and
4 many others. Thank you.

5 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you very
6 much. It's past 2:10, so we are now closed
7 down as to the people putting names in. If
8 you want to raise it now so we can have it.

9 And Mr. Weprin.

10 ASSEMBLYMAN WEPRIN: Thank you,
11 Mr. Chairman.

12 Welcome, Chancellor. I've told you
13 this on prior occasions, that I think you're
14 a breath of fresh air, just being an
15 educator, as you pointed out, for 50 years
16 and having been part of the system at every
17 level. And I'm happy to see that you
18 referenced working closely with UFT and CSA,
19 who we're going to be hearing from in a
20 little, and something that prior
21 administrations have not done, and very often
22 prior chancellors recently have not been
23 educators as well. So I personally am very
24 happy that you are there.

1 Two of the high schools you mentioned
2 are in my district, Richmond Hill High School
3 and Hillcrest High School. And I know you've
4 also been to Edison High School with their
5 vocational training, and I agree with the CTE
6 statements.

7 Having said all of that -- and I did
8 mention this to the mayor yesterday when he
9 referred to, as you did, to the
10 infrastructure of some of the schools being a
11 hundred years old and older -- I chair an
12 Assembly task force on people with
13 disabilities, and I was very disturbed by the
14 finding of the investigation by the U.S.
15 Attorney's office regarding 83 percent, which
16 seems like a very large number, of New York
17 City public schools not complying with ADA.

18 And I know the mayor is personally
19 committed to ADA. I marched with him, at his
20 request, to have the first Disability Pride
21 Parade ever in the City of New York, and I
22 know he's very committed to disability and to
23 ADA access.

24 What is the plan to bring that 83

1 percent up to ADA standards? You know, I
2 know there's a lot of money going to be
3 involved. But was there a formal response?
4 Because I think the U.S. Attorney
5 investigation asked for a formal response
6 sometime last week. Did you do a formal
7 response on behalf of the city, and can I get
8 a copy of it if you have?

9 CHANCELLOR FARINA: I'm happy to give
10 you more specifics, but most of the schools
11 have some point of accessibility. Where we
12 have tried, and it's -- we're doing a better
13 job, have a long way to go -- is putting
14 elevators, for example, in more of our
15 buildings. Not an easy thing, because
16 obviously there's a lot of construction
17 that's involved, and other space has to be
18 given up.

19 I know ramps are not the best
20 solution, but they are a solution that we're
21 using, and a lot of this goes particularly to
22 our wheelchair students. We have also in the
23 past made sure that within a certain
24 geographical distance there's always at least

1 one barrier-free school. But those
2 barrier-free schools generally have been
3 built in the last 30 years. The age of the
4 buildings does make a difference. But it's
5 not because of lack of trying.

6 In terms of a specific time frame,
7 we'll be happy to get back to you. It is --
8 the mayor has instructed us to look at this
9 as an issue and to come up with some
10 recommendations and solutions, so I'll be
11 happy to do it. But age of buildings makes a
12 difference.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN WEPRIN: Has there been a
14 formal response to the investigation yet?

15 CHANCELLOR FARINA: No. Actually
16 we're working on it right now.

17 (Cross-talk.)

18 ASSEMBLYMAN WEPRIN: Would we be able
19 to get copies of what you're saying?

20 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Sure.

21 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Mr. Weprin, can I
22 break in for a minute on this?

23 ASSEMBLYMAN WEPRIN: Sure.

24 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: I have a problem

1 with this too, also.

2 One other comment, can you make sure
3 you work on those schools that are going to
4 be used for elections? You're going to have
5 four elections --

6 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Absolutely.

7 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: -- in the state
8 this year, and the first one I think is in
9 April --

10 CHANCELLOR FARINA: We're working with
11 the Board of Education even as we speak,
12 because that is obviously a priority.

13 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Yes, thank you.
14 I'm sorry, Mr. Weprin.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN WEPRIN: No, thank you,
16 Mr. Chairman, that was a very good addition.
17 And I'm concerned about that as well.

18 Thank you, Chancellor.

19 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you very
20 much. Our next speaker is Senator Leroy
21 Comrie.

22 SENATOR COMRIE: Thank you, Madam
23 Chair.

24 Good afternoon, Chancellor. I'll wait

1 for you to finish writing your notes. I know
2 you've got a lot of things to catch up on.

3 I wanted to ask you two questions.
4 They talked about mayoral control already. I
5 just want to say that I hope that we can --
6 the main issue that I hear about mayoral
7 control is the ability of parents to impact
8 the system and to speak on different issues.
9 And I hope that we can add some additional
10 component of that to mayoral control so that
11 we can get enough -- so we can put that to
12 bed.

13 I think that mayoral control is an
14 important component and doing it more than
15 one year is important also. I don't know
16 about doing for seven years, extending it
17 beyond the term of the mayor, but I think the
18 major issue is that parents want to have an
19 ability to have real comments on issues and
20 policies at every level of the system. And
21 if they can have a period of comment or a
22 rotating parent on the PEP panels and also on
23 the Community Education panels, where they
24 can have a period of comment and feedback, it

1 would be, I think, a big help to parents
2 around the system.

3 And also, you know, not just at PTA
4 meetings, but having an opportunity to go
5 into the local schools and to participate at
6 a real level is something that parents are
7 still asking about. I know that we have the
8 parent coordinators that are trying to put
9 things together, but especially parents that
10 have limited time and access want to be able
11 to have their own opportunities to come in,
12 not necessarily within those limited windows
13 that they're being offered now.

14 And I think that we can find other
15 ways to create opportunities to allow more
16 parents to have access to policy issues and
17 understanding those issues and articulating
18 their concerns about those specific issues as
19 well.

20 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, let me tell
21 you three things that we have done
22 differently in the last year and a half.

23 Number one, we have given the CECs a
24 little bit more freedom and responsibilities

1 in terms of certain issues. Certainly
2 rezoning, bringing issues to the table at the
3 CECs, and how the CEC elections take place
4 has incorporated more parent voices.

5 I now meet with all the CEC presidents
6 on Saturdays. That was something I did
7 because when we were meeting at night, not
8 everyone could make it or people were rushed
9 or, you know, there was all kinds of issues.
10 So we meet once a month on Saturdays for
11 anywhere from two hours or more, if it takes
12 place.

13 We now have subcommittees of the CECs.
14 One of the subcommittees is on enrollment,
15 because a lot of parents around the city have
16 very strong opinions on enrollment,
17 particularly middle school enrollment. So we
18 have committees that are now working on
19 issues that seem to be somewhat more systemic
20 than just an individual district.

21 The other thing is I've asked all
22 schools to hold more open houses. Tours of
23 the building, we now have four days a year,
24 compared to two that we've had in the past,

1 I didn't even know hadn't been done, when we
2 have CEC meetings, we ask parents to ask
3 questions publicly but also we give them
4 cards on which they can write questions
5 privately. And every single parent that
6 addresses us with a question gets an answer.
7 And they generally get it within two weeks.
8 And it can be specific to their school, it
9 could be something they think we should do
10 universally.

11 So parent voice is very, very
12 important to me. We do a lot of parent
13 conferences. We have encouraged parent
14 organizations to come talk to us about
15 different issues. So -- but anyone who has
16 more specific suggestions on more things we
17 can do with parents, I'm happy to take them
18 under advisement.

19 SENATOR COMRIE: I'll be happy to send
20 you the specifics.

21 I want to applaud you for making all
22 the CEC meetings that you've made and having
23 public meetings in the evening. I attended
24 the one you had at 238 with District 29. The

1 auditorium was full, and there was a great
2 discourse back and forth. And I think those
3 types of things really empower parents and
4 they feel involved in making that. And I'm
5 impressed that you've been doing that all
6 over the city and are continuing to do that,
7 to have direct contact.

8 You talked about parity, and I wanted
9 to talk about the rezoning and the
10 distribution of children within school
11 districts, especially when we have some
12 schools that are overcrowded from children
13 and schools that are undercrowded. And how
14 can we start looking at making those changes
15 within the school year so that we don't have
16 schools that are undercrowded when we have
17 children overcrowded? Especially in parts of
18 29 and 28, we have some schools that really
19 need to get some relief, and while we have
20 other vacant space in schools. Just to keep
21 it parochial for a minute, but I understand
22 that's a citywide issue as well.

23 How can we create opportunities to
24 change those numbers so that these schools

1 can have a balanced and workable number of
2 children?

3 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, I think here
4 again, the parents' wishes have to be
5 listened to. And this is where -- this is
6 the one issue that it goes through the CEC.
7 But we have also sent people, from Elizabeth
8 Rose, Dorita Gibson -- these are deputy
9 chancellors -- and also Josh Wallack. But
10 all have to work together. Because it's
11 about how you're changing your enrollment
12 patterns, what is the real -- we have a
13 person who's an expert on facilities, does
14 nothing but looks and sees what the school
15 capacity is or what it could be. So those
16 are all things that we're looking at.

17 But the other thing is, you know,
18 parents get very attached to their
19 neighborhood school. So also convincing
20 parents that they're going to go to a
21 different school than what they traditionally
22 have gone to, it's about assuring them that
23 the other school is as good as the school
24 they're at. And that really, to me, is my

1 mission. And I wouldn't recommend doing any
2 kind of -- unless I could honestly say, in my
3 deepest heart, Guys, either school, your
4 child is going to get an education. And
5 that's certainly something I can say without
6 being at all hesitant in the rezoning at 308
7 and PS 8. I know both principals, I know
8 both student bodies, I've been to both
9 schools numerous times, and I can say to
10 parents: Guys, this is really a good thing.

11 So I do think it's a situation by
12 situation -- no blanket statements on this,
13 but this is something -- and many parents now
14 in CECs are saying to me, have you thought
15 about this, would you do this? I'm anxious
16 for parents to tell me first before we have
17 to go out to the public. So I certainly
18 encourage your constituencies to look at some
19 of the issues, and then what do we do from
20 there.

21 SENATOR COMRIE: All right. Great.
22 Well, also I support the CTE program.
23 Hillcrest High School I share with
24 Assemblyman Weprin, and the nursing program

1 there is a great program. And I hope that we
2 can get the proper people to continue that
3 program and a proper teacher to come in.
4 Maybe you could work with your college, which
5 has nursing programs, also Queensborough, to
6 borrow faculty to continue that program and
7 maybe do that on a citywide basis. I think
8 that would be critical.

9 CHANCELLOR FARINA: I'm going to use
10 this opportunity today to send you a letter
11 by next week. Because, you know, this is
12 like -- we have to strike while the iron is
13 hot. I don't know if you heard yesterday,
14 there was a national report on what the
15 careers in the future are. And the top 10 or
16 20 careers are all health-related. They all
17 have to do with geriatric care as well as
18 health-related. And that means that we
19 really need to put those programs in our
20 schools, because a lot of our kids will have
21 jobs and this is what they're training on.
22 So those CTE programs are going to be crucial
23 to making sure that we're moving forward on
24 this.

1 SENATOR COMRIE: Right.

2 And finally, Chancellor, we don't have
3 a community school in District 29 anywhere,
4 which has one of the longest commute times in
5 the city. We really need to find
6 collocations, hopefully, in 29 and 28, they
7 don't have a community school.

8 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Because you have
9 no renewal schools. So that was our first
10 option, to put community schools where you
11 have renewal schools. But as we move
12 forward, when more money becomes available,
13 there are several schools I actually visited
14 in 29, one of which would be a good
15 candidate. But it's really prioritizing the
16 community schools that are struggling
17 schools.

18 SENATOR COMRIE: Oh, okay. Well, I'm
19 glad that we don't have renewal schools, but
20 we have parents with some of the longest
21 commute times in the city, and having a
22 school that's open -- I would hope that every
23 school in the system could be open until 7
24 o'clock, as I told the state commissioner,

1 and I hope that we can work to that model.
2 As well, especially with working parents,
3 many of my parents have to leave their homes
4 before 7 a.m. They're not getting back, with
5 the long commute times, till 7 p.m. So the
6 more that we can set those up, the better.

7 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, keep in mind
8 that last year we put after-school programs
9 at every single middle school in New York
10 City. And our thinking on that one was that
11 who are the kids that are most likely to need
12 to be in a safe place? And we decided it was
13 teenagers, that adolescents have the most
14 need to be actively occupied. And by the
15 way, our after-school programs, different
16 than community schools, are focused on things
17 like the arts and chess and -- some
18 academics, but a variety of sports and arts
19 does a lot of those works for us. And those
20 are after-school providers, expanded-time
21 providers. And we did it in all middle
22 schools. So now the elementary school
23 parents are saying: What about us?

24 Many of them, if they're Title I

1 schools, have used some of their Title I
2 funding for after-school programs. The
3 people who are really kind of out there a
4 little are the ones who are not Title I
5 schools where parents have either fund-raised
6 for this. But, you know, the principals are
7 asking this, as are parents. But it's a
8 matter of when you have limited funds, where
9 do you prioritize? But it isn't that we
10 haven't thought about which are the
11 neighborhoods that we need to do more in
12 terms of after-school.

13 SENATOR COMRIE: Thank you. Let me
14 just compliment you and your staff. You've
15 always been responsive and detailed. And
16 even when you haven't given me the response I
17 wanted to hear, it's been a response that we
18 needed to hear. So I want to thank you for
19 being diligent and getting back to us.

20 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Thank you.

21 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you very
22 much, Senator.

23 Assemblywoman Malliotakis.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MALLIOTAKIS: Thank you,

1 Chancellor. I just wanted to, well, first
2 echo some of the sentiments of my colleague
3 Senator Savino regarding the \$868 million and
4 the five-year capital plan. There are
5 schools in my district, as I'm sure most the
6 representatives here, that are at least 100
7 percent or 150 percent over capacity. She
8 had mentioned PS 13 on Staten Island. We've
9 been talking to our local council member
10 about that. We'd really like to maybe have a
11 meeting with you regarding that particular
12 school. Being with new developments in the
13 mayor's affordable housing plan and the Mount
14 Manresa development, we have significant
15 concerns. Also, parochial school closures in
16 that area have led to an overpopulation in
17 that school.

18 In the Brooklyn part of my district,
19 there are two in particular, PS 176 and
20 PS 127. The belief is that it's been the
21 problem of illegal conversions in the Bay
22 Ridge/Dyker Heights area that have led to
23 overcrowding at those schools. So certainly
24 if we're going to be adding seats, if you

1 could take a look at those as well.

2 I wanted to ask you a little bit about
3 some of the out-of-pocket expenses that
4 teachers may be having in the schools. It
5 just always seems interesting, I guess, to me
6 that the state spends \$9.5 billion this year
7 for the City of New York, and it's gone up
8 significantly over the last few years, we
9 spend about 19,000 per pupil, yet we always
10 see the teachers don't have paper, they don't
11 have basic supplies that they need to perform
12 their duties.

13 And so I'm very happy to see that the
14 Governor has put in a \$200 tax credit for the
15 teachers in this year's budget. I wish it
16 would be \$500, which is a bill that I and a
17 couple of my colleagues have, that would --
18 if I was going to do a tax credit. But I
19 just wanted to hear your thoughts on it.

20 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, first of
21 all, good teachers always spend money out of
22 pocket. I was a teacher for 22 years, if I
23 wanted to give the students a party, it came
24 out of pocket. If I wanted to buy something

1 for the classroom that maybe was a little
2 unusual or different -- and in my case,
3 always unusual or different -- it came out of
4 pocket. It was part of the expenses, at the
5 time, of doing my job. My husband, who's in
6 accounting, would say to me, Well, that's
7 tax-deductible. And I would keep my
8 receipts -- and you always have said the same
9 thing.

10 CFO ORLANDO: Sure.

11 CHANCELLOR FARINA: And I had a very
12 large envelope of tax-deductibles. The same
13 thing when I was a principal, I would buy
14 books for my teachers on my own, would buy
15 things for the school on my own. I think
16 that's part of it. I do think having a tax
17 credit would help. But I do think that if
18 you want to do a job, there are always things
19 you want to do that are different classroom
20 to classroom.

21 One teacher may want to do baking -- I
22 used to cook with my students one year every
23 single Friday. There was no way that that
24 money was coming out of any school budget.

1 There's nothing there for that kind of
2 consumable. But I wasn't going to stop -- I
3 decided this year, I was teaching American
4 history, that I would -- I had this book, the
5 Cookbook of Presidents, and I would cook the
6 menus that different presidents considered
7 their favorite. Till I hit one president who
8 liked lobster, and I stopped right there
9 because I didn't have enough money to do
10 that.

11 But I do think you're always going to
12 have that. I think whatever career you have,
13 you're going to spend some extra money. I
14 think certainly -- you know, we have
15 teacher's choice -- donorschoose.org, which
16 has been very helpful to a lot of our
17 schools. But there's no easy answer to this
18 in terms of -- but I think the tax credit
19 will go a long way to helping them.

20 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MALLIOTAKIS: Okay,
21 great. Last year, 2015-2016, New York City
22 received \$531 million in Contracts for
23 Excellence funding. Of that, only
24 \$7.5 million went to Staten Island public

1 schools, representing only about 1.42 percent
2 of the funding. Staten Island public schools
3 serve over 70,000 students, as you know,
4 which represents about 6.2 percent of all New
5 York City students. So if you were to do
6 this proportionally, Staten Island should get
7 about 31 million. So I just wanted to know
8 how you make this determination.

9 CFO ORLANDO: Sure. The C for E money
10 that you're referencing, there are state
11 regulations promulgated on how the money gets
12 distributed, and it's determined based on
13 need, essentially. And so we look across the
14 entire city at the neediest schools. And
15 although there are needy schools in all
16 boroughs, it seems that as the money gets
17 distributed, Staten Island schools are
18 comparatively less needy. That's not to say
19 that they're not needy, please. Yes --

20 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MALLIOTAKIS: I still do
21 believe, though, it should be more
22 proportional based on population. I mean, we
23 have this fight all the time with HHC, right?
24 We want our fair share of hospital funding.

1 We don't even have a public hospital, we say,
2 well, give us our proportional share on
3 population for those hospitals that we do
4 have. So I think this is sort of a similar
5 case -- which we could talk at another time
6 about.

7 CFO ORLANDO: Happy to. Happy to --

8 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MALLIOTAKIS: Thank you.
9 Thank you for answering.

10 CHANCELLOR FARINA: And just so you
11 know, and many of you are already taking
12 advantage of it, any of you who want to have
13 one-on-one conversations with any member of
14 my staff or myself, I'm happy to do it.

15 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MALLIOTAKIS: Thank you.

16 CHANCELLOR FARINA: And you deal with
17 our intergov team, and then just give us a
18 heads-up on some of the issues so we can
19 research them before we meet.

20 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MALLIOTAKIS: Thank you.

21 I have two more questions.

22 I saw an article in the New York
23 Times, I guess it was a few months ago, about
24 the first day of school you visited a school,

1 PS 212 in Queens. They have a Move to
2 Improve program.

3 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Oh, yes.

4 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MALLIOTAKIS: The Move
5 to Improve program. And included in that
6 program is mindfulness programming, which I
7 happen to truly believe in. I believe that
8 this, you know, mindfulness, meditation,
9 quiet time, whatever you want to call it, I
10 believe it is really a tool to help children
11 focus, help their concentration, especially
12 children with attention deficit disorder,
13 hyperactivity, children with autism. So I
14 just would love to hear about what your
15 thoughts are on this program, and how do we
16 get one in my district?

17 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, this is a
18 program -- in fact, we had gone there for an
19 entirely different purpose, they were
20 starting a new language program, I believe,
21 and that's why we were there. The principal
22 told me it was done as a result of teachers
23 saying that life was too pressured and too
24 rushed. So the teachers went for training,

1 and really it's a very simple thing. It's
2 really more about taking a deep breath and
3 learning to let it out -- I mean, I actually
4 sat with the kids and did it, so I know it
5 does work at that level. But we made that a
6 Showcase School, which is schools that we
7 think are doing something excellent, so other
8 schools can go there and observe it and see
9 if they can replicate it. The only thing
10 that holds us back from doing that is the
11 willingness of teachers to be trained in it.
12 In this particular school, I think the
13 principal had a guidance counselor that was
14 trained in it, and she trained others.

15 So it's certainly an encouragement,
16 and principals can request it in terms of
17 they want more training in it, but it ties in
18 with all the things that we're doing in terms
19 of mental health and wellness in general.

20 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MALLIOTAKIS: How many
21 schools in the city do that?

22 CHANCELLOR FARINA: I don't know right
23 now, but I can find out.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MALLIOTAKIS: Okay,

1 great. And I'd love to come visit one with
2 you if you would like to take me.

3 CHANCELLOR FARINA: That principal
4 speaks very highly of it.

5 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MALLIOTAKIS: Great.

6 I've just got one last question. I
7 read a report about this new policy on
8 student behavior, about school discipline,
9 and it was an article -- which I'm sure
10 you're familiar with -- that said in October
11 that, you know, they started giving out these
12 cards now, they're warning cards, instead of
13 suspension. But there was one student who in
14 October was -- instead of -- you know, he was
15 carrying seven bags of marijuana. How does
16 somebody like that get just a warning card?
17 This is for high school students, too, and
18 the warning card says you're supposed to take
19 the card home and discuss it with your
20 parents. I mean, this is not really
21 realistic that we can expect a child, a
22 student, a high school student specifically,
23 to go home and discuss this type of stuff
24 with their parents.

1 I think it's -- it's -- in terms of we
2 don't want to suspend kids, right, if there
3 were other circumstances in there -- dressing
4 inappropriately, cursing, whatever it was --
5 I can understand that. But seven bags of
6 marijuana, to send them a card instead of
7 sending them for suspension, I think is
8 really not the right move.

9 I just wanted to know what your
10 thoughts are on this, and the reason they
11 changed the policy.

12 CHANCELLOR FARINA: We have had a
13 committee working on this for the last year,
14 almost. And I think we're trying to balance
15 what is really behavior that needs to be
16 constantly reprimanded or somehow penalized,
17 and not that we just -- part of normal
18 behavior. So obviously that's something I'd
19 have to look at. I don't know that case
20 specifically.

21 But one of the things that I'm very
22 clear about is I started looking at kids who
23 were suspended and how many and for what, and
24 some from more schools than others, and there

1 was a big inconsistency. So in this school
2 you got suspended for X, but in this school,
3 no. So we need to bring more of a systemic
4 approach to suspensions.

5 We also know that with suspensions,
6 students who are suspended for too long tend
7 not to go back to school at all. So would
8 you rather have them in school learning and
9 on a career path, or do you want to make sure
10 that they're the first natural dropouts.

11 So this is something that we've spent
12 more time on and we haven't really finalized
13 it, because we have to bring in NYPD, you
14 know, principals' opinions -- but we have a
15 committee that's working on this. The
16 stickiest point is the suspension around an
17 issue called insubordination. And that
18 means -- what do we mean by it? What I
19 consider insubordination, someone else might
20 not. So we're trying to codify what are some
21 of the issues and what is the appropriate
22 penalty for those issues, so in one school it
23 doesn't become 10 days and in another school
24 20 days.

1 So this is really something that we're
2 working with. We do not have an answer as of
3 right now. But it's part of the process of
4 also making sure that some schools,
5 particularly in certain neighborhoods, don't
6 oversuspend versus other schools that
7 undersuspend.

8 So this is a puzzle, a problem, but
9 it's still in the works.

10 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MALLIOTAKIS: Okay. And
11 I do think that it needs to be reexamined as
12 we go forward, because we don't want what you
13 said, which is insubordination, we don't want
14 children or students to think that they can
15 get away with disrespecting their teachers,
16 their colleagues or their principals --

17 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Absolutely. Also,
18 everybody had a right to feel safe in a
19 school, not just students, but teachers and
20 principals as well. That is what we
21 guarantee, that if you send your child to
22 school, they're going to be safe. So I take
23 that very seriously.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MALLIOTAKIS: Thank you.

1 I've run out of time, so I will end there.

2 Thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you.

4 Senator?

5 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you very
6 much.

7 Our next speaker is Senator Velmanette
8 Montgomery.

9 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Good afternoon,
10 Chancellor.

11 I can't help but make a note of
12 something that I hope my male colleagues will
13 not feel offended, but it is a certainly
14 wonderful thing in our history, in the
15 history of our state, to see a perfect
16 alignment in our educational system, with
17 women at the head of every system.

18 (Scattered applause.)

19 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Thank you. I
20 appreciate your acknowledging. So you're
21 there, our chancellor --

22 CHANCELLOR FARINA: It's about time.

23 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: It's about time.

24 Our commissioner was here this morning, our

1 SUNY chancellor is a female, the Regents,
2 outgoing Regents chancellor is female, the
3 NYSUT head is female. So we're in good hands
4 and good stead. So I thank you and I'm happy
5 that you're here. As a seasoned educator, I
6 can really feel it. It's very different.

7 I would just like to, you know,
8 appreciate also that you have referred to
9 school-based health clinics in your report,
10 and I am so happy that you acknowledge that.
11 And it's been a long time, we have not really
12 advanced, to my satisfaction, enough. But
13 you're acknowledging it, you're working on
14 it, and it's going to be part of the building
15 of the community schools that I think is so
16 important.

17 I just want to say to you that you
18 also mentioned very different programs that
19 you have instituted along the lines of
20 college-readiness initiatives. And certainly
21 that's something that we all applaud you for.

22 I want to just mention -- I'm not sure
23 that this was highlighted, but we've talked
24 about it, I know that you have. I know that

1 you're interested, and the commissioner this
2 morning indicated that she certainly agrees
3 with you and is going to be working with you
4 on it, developing the middle school as part
5 of the pipeline to college. That we seem to
6 not have put enough emphasis on that, and
7 that's really where we need the most help.

8 And so I really am looking forward to
9 us being able to talk a lot more about that,
10 as we have in the past.

11 CHANCELLOR FARINA: My first six
12 months on this job, I did nothing but middle
13 schools. I am a firm believer that middle
14 schools are the crux of our system.

15 If you look at the system, that
16 elementary schools -- and now with pre-K --
17 we have those in pretty good shape. You
18 know, some need more help than others, but
19 honestly it's -- middle schools have several
20 issues, seventh grade in particular. You
21 have students going through social/emotional
22 issues. You have them deciding that -- they
23 don't even know if they want to be in school,
24 number one. But also they don't like

1 themselves, they don't -- so teachers have to
2 be of a different, you know, attitude.

3 You have teachers going for teaching
4 licenses, they know they want to be a high
5 school teacher because they want to teach a
6 subject, and they know they want to be an
7 elementary school -- no one says I want to be
8 a middle school teacher; somehow you end up
9 there. So I do think it's really important
10 to focus.

11 And because I did so much work with
12 middle schools those first six months, I
13 found some extraordinary examples of fabulous
14 middle schools. So if you look at our
15 learning partners in Showcase, the vast
16 majority are middle schools, because there is
17 the right way to run a middle school and the
18 wrong way.

19 So I do believe that middle schools
20 that offer arts programs, middle schools that
21 offer choices for students -- and
22 particularly choices around their making
23 decisions for themselves -- middle schools
24 that are of a certain size and run by houses,

1 so that you have the same guidance counselor
2 for three years, you have the same assistant
3 principal three years, these are better
4 models than some other models. So I do
5 believe that we're getting better at middle
6 school.

7 But also eighth-grade teachers must
8 start talking to ninth-grade teachers, the
9 same way that fifth-grade teachers need to
10 start talking to sixth-grade teachers. So
11 because we're now back in superintendencies,
12 you know -- the other structure, the middle
13 schools and high schools and elementary were
14 not geographically together. You had a
15 superintendent of this school, and right
16 across the street another superintendent, and
17 these principals didn't even know each
18 other's names.

19 So our thought was, under the
20 superintendencies that are geographically
21 based, like districts, that every middle
22 school would know all their feeder elementary
23 schools. And because they're all under one
24 superintendent, they meet at least once a

1 month and talk to each other. That, to me,
2 is a crucial point in terms of getting that
3 working.

4 We've also asked high schools now, who
5 tended to have their own little islands, to
6 kind of start adopting middle schools that
7 they all work with. For example, I went to
8 -- oh, God, let me think -- Dominic
9 D'Angelo's school. He has a phenomenal
10 orchestra, symphony orchestra, a
11 hundred-and-some-odd players. So I said to
12 him, are you working with any high schools so
13 that your kids, when they leave your program,
14 can automatically go. And I think he's
15 working with Fort Hamilton. But he also has
16 now two elementary schools where his teachers
17 go to work with them so they will have a
18 path.

19 So yes, we need a pre-K to 12 path,
20 and we need these people to know each other
21 and to talk to each other, but also to have
22 programs that will become consistent. I
23 mean, one of the other things that I think
24 eventually would help in the changing of the

1 laws, and I've already discussed this with
2 MaryEllen, is a ruling that says in middle
3 school you have to offer three different art
4 forms. I would love for her to have some
5 flexibility and say that if you have one form
6 that is fabulous, can we do the same one over
7 three years. Isn't it better to be really,
8 really good at something than have a little
9 bit of this, a little bit of that?

10 So there's a lot of things that I
11 think can be done to make middle schools even
12 better than the great ones really are right
13 now.

14 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Thank you for
15 that. And speaking of alignment, there's
16 another area that I think the commissioner is
17 certainly aligned with you. You mentioned in
18 your statement that one of the principles of
19 success under your leadership is that you
20 want to see more sharing of best practices.
21 And that in fact is one of the pieces, the
22 tenets of the -- that the commissioner gave
23 us today, and that is a part of the section
24 of their budget proposal that deals

1 specifically with improving the outcomes for
2 boys and young men of color, but I think it's
3 a principle that we can probably use
4 throughout our system. And that is they have
5 requested a specific funding for developing
6 exemplary school models and sharing those
7 practices.

8 So hopefully you will be able to and
9 we will be able to benefit from that in --
10 for the fact that you're trying to do this,
11 you should be able to access some of those
12 funds. So we will be working together to
13 make sure that happens, because that's what
14 we need. There are some really wonderful
15 models. And one of them, as you know -- I've
16 spoken to you so many times about -- is the
17 Harbor School, which is one of those just
18 absolute jewels in your system, in our
19 system. And we need more of those. We need
20 a lot more CTE programs that work to actually
21 prepare young people to go into the world and
22 be more successful in many different areas.
23 So I thank you for your attention to that.

24 CHANCELLOR FARINA: To me,

1 collaboration is much better than
2 competition. Competition you care about
3 yourself; collaboration you have to be --
4 your success should only happen if you bring
5 someone else along to success.

6 So in our models we have what we call
7 master principals, master assistant
8 principals, and teacher leaders. Which get
9 extra money -- not because their test scores
10 are higher, but because they've opened their
11 doors and shared what they've already learned
12 with a lot of other people.

13 So this spirit of collaboration works
14 for all kids, and to me that's the model I
15 want to see.

16 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Yes. And
17 personally and, you know, otherwise I worry a
18 lot about the fact that children with the
19 most needs are treated experimentally far too
20 often, and what really works is never
21 replicated widely, doesn't get factored into
22 becoming part of the system and the way that
23 we work with young people.

24 So I'm just happy to see that both you

1 and the commissioner are looking at ways to
2 look for the best practices and begin to
3 utilize them more widely. So thank you.

4 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

5 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you very
6 much.

7 Mr. Felix Ortiz.

8 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: I'm corrected, I
9 stand corrected. Madam Chairwoman.

10 (Laughter.)

11 ASSEMBLYMAN ORTIZ: Thank you,
12 Mr. Chair {inaudible}.

13 MULTIPLE VOICES: Your mic.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN ORTIZ: Is it now working?

15 MULTIPLE VOICES: Yes, it is.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN ORTIZ: Okay, I'm not
17 going to repeat myself, but I will say
18 welcome for being here.

19 Just a couple of -- first of all, I
20 would like just to thank you so much for
21 intervening on PS 169 when we had a hard
22 situation about banning the Santa Claus to
23 come to PS 169. The bad news is that that
24 Santa Claus happened to be me. So I really

1 appreciate that you listened to the parents
2 that were really concerned. To the
3 principal, I thank her as well, because I
4 don't believe that we should deny our kids an
5 opportunity to enjoy their holidays. So
6 thank you very much for your intervention on
7 that. Thank you.

8 I had a couple of questions regarding
9 a follow up on probably Senator Marcellino
10 about guidance counselors and social workers.
11 As you probably know, one of every six
12 Hispanics, they're the age of 14 through 20.
13 And when you mentioned the middle schools,
14 this question came back to my mind again. As
15 a result that most of these girls happen to
16 be Hispanic girls, who their thought is to
17 have a tendency to commit suicide. And this
18 happened in my district as well. We had an
19 incident where a young girl was on 54th
20 Street and 4th Avenue trying to jump on the
21 rail of the subway station. We had another
22 one on 9th Street who was trying to jump on
23 the rail. We're talking about 13, 14, 15, 16
24 years old.

1 My question to you is, what kind of
2 assessment, mental health assessment, is the
3 Board of Education conducting in order to
4 assess our children within the school system?

5 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, we do have
6 protocols for guidance counselors on how to
7 talk about suicide in their respective
8 schools, that this is an issue. We have
9 guides around suicide.

10 In terms of assessing, having mental
11 health clinics is one of the ways to do it.
12 I think one of the challenges that we have is
13 how do we talk to parents about how to talk
14 to their children about this.

15 One of the things that we have found,
16 at least personally, in the last couple of
17 years that I've been here, is that there is
18 no one pattern for most of our suicides.
19 What seems to be a little bit more prevalent
20 is absence from school or fear of some kind
21 of repercussions. But it's not about
22 assessing which kids might be able to -- it's
23 still based on teacher recommendations or
24 parents coming to school to worry about their

1 kids. But also sometimes we also find that
2 if teachers -- and I just think of two cases
3 recently where teachers brought this to
4 parents, parents are in denial.

5 So there's got to be a lot more
6 workshops for parents about signs of, and we
7 have those. We have brochures on those
8 issues. And also to guidance counselors and
9 teachers, if you think your child is in need
10 of an intervention, what should you do. Our
11 guidance counselors are prepared to talk
12 about these issues, and putting more guidance
13 counselors and more social workers in our
14 schools is another way to go. But it's not
15 an easy topic.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN ORTIZ: Let me just
17 entertain the question back again about
18 the -- asking about how many social workers
19 and guidance counselors and psychologists do
20 we have in the system. Do every school have
21 a social worker? Do every school have a
22 guidance counselor? Do every school have a
23 psychologist?

24 CHANCELLOR FARINA: The psychologists

1 are used more for testing purposes. Most
2 schools have either a social worker or a
3 guidance counselor. Some schools have both;
4 some schools have three or four. Depends on
5 the population of the school.

6 But we can get you the specific
7 numbers. And that's a number we keep adding
8 to.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN ORTIZ: Yeah, I would
10 appreciate it if you can get back to me on
11 that. Because as you know, I represent
12 School District 15 and School District 20.
13 And there's a big discrepancy about both
14 school districts. And I do visit the schools
15 very often. I go to the schools Fridays, and
16 I speak to the kids. And I have maintained
17 my mission to be there for the last 22 years.

18 And one of the biggest issues that
19 continues to be addressed is we don't have
20 enough guidance counselors, and we would like
21 to have a psychologist inside; some schools
22 have a psychologist. Like you stated, and I
23 agree with you, some need more help than
24 others. But I do believe that is a pattern

1 that continues to happen in Sunset Park
2 itself.

3 And I would like also to thank you for
4 what you did in PS 15 about the autism, to
5 address the autism in the school, because I
6 think that can serve as a model, which is
7 another issue that I have worked very hard on
8 it, to make sure that we take care of those
9 kids who are suffering from autism and be
10 integrated into the regular mix. I'm for it.

11 My other question is you mentioned
12 about -- which I also agree with you -- on
13 art, music and, I will add to it, acting.
14 I'm a very big fan of that. Since I've been
15 elected to office, I've been putting money to
16 School District 15 and School District 20, to
17 make sure that every school, as much as I
18 can, will have instruments, will have the
19 equipment necessary to present -- to give
20 this to students in the school system. But
21 one of the lacking is that when I do that,
22 they don't have a teacher. We don't have an
23 art teacher, they don't have a music teacher,
24 they don't have an acting teacher. We have a

1 great model school in MS 443, which I work
2 with them very, very close, and PS 10, for
3 example, has another group, but they don't
4 have -- you know, some of them lacking in
5 teachers.

6 My question is, what are you trying to
7 do in order to make sure that we can give
8 these opportunities to the kids? Because
9 it's very helpful for the development and the
10 intellect of our kids.

11 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, first, let
12 me answer your three questions. First of
13 all, the fact that we're bringing back arts
14 teachers means that there's been a number of
15 years where many people didn't go into this
16 field because they didn't think they would
17 have jobs. Because I meet with the deans of
18 the School of Education like every three
19 months, and I've said to them, these are the
20 areas that I need you to prepare more people:
21 Guidance counselors, ESL teachers, special ed
22 teachers, arts teachers.

23 We know what the needs are going to
24 be. So that's one of the reasons we entered

1 into this partnership with Lincoln Center,
2 with -- we're also thinking of other cultural
3 institutions where, for example, BAM could
4 help do some of this.

5 In terms of not having enough
6 teachers, especially in District 15, all they
7 have to do is pick up the phone, and we have
8 a department that helps people get those
9 teachers.

10 This year we also put out grants -- if
11 schools were willing to share teachers and we
12 specifically did it based on the issue that
13 we brought up before, if an elementary school
14 and a middle school wanted to share the same
15 arts teacher, with the idea that eventually
16 you'd move from here to there, we would pay a
17 piece of this money. Part of the \$23 million
18 was to encourage more arts teachers to be
19 shared between two schools.

20 But principals have to apply for this.
21 They have to let us know -- we have an entire
22 department that reviews resumes. I can't
23 imagine PS 10, Laura couldn't pick up the
24 phone and say "Do you know of anyone?" So I

1 do think that's part of it.

2 The other thing is -- and I do
3 encourage you to look at the arts also from
4 residencies. We have a tremendous amount in
5 all our boroughs, fabulous arts residents
6 that are willing to come to schools and work
7 with kids. And there are many of them who
8 would do that work.

9 And also the other thing we've entered
10 into partnerships with is for schools that
11 want to start instrumental programs, we now
12 have a relationship with WH -- one of the
13 media companies which actually donates
14 instruments to schools if they want to start
15 musical -- it will come to us, right.

16 But the reality is we're having the
17 right art teacher in the right discipline and
18 making sure the principal has a plan. The
19 one arts form -- and I agree with you on
20 theater arts, especially for our English
21 language learners. Getting up -- nothing
22 improves speech more than getting on the
23 stage and feeling empowered. As part of the
24 Hamilton money, the kids have developed

1 monologues and they have to go on the stage
2 and compete with each other, the schools that
3 are coming. That thing on Broadway is going
4 to be almost all day. So that's partially
5 what we're going to do.

6 The most popular arts form right now
7 in terms of unexpectedness is dance. Dance,
8 however, requires that we have a dance room.
9 It requires a certain kind of flooring. It
10 requires mirrors. There's a whole other
11 infrastructure that we have to put in place.
12 But we're finding that more and more schools
13 are requesting that.

14 So I do think arts are alive and well.
15 But, you know, just let me know and we'll
16 figure out a way to get them teachers.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN ORTIZ: Last but not
18 least, because my time is running out, I
19 forgot to wear my NYU hat, but you have a
20 beautiful one over there. I did went to NYU
21 myself as well.

22 I have two pieces of legislation which
23 I would like your staff to look into it and
24 give us feedback. One is mandating a social

1 worker in every school in the State of New
2 York, and the second one is mandating a
3 guidance counselor and a psychologist in
4 every school. I do believe fundamentally
5 that if we can identify the problems of our
6 children at an early stage of their life, we
7 will be able to intervene early, engaging the
8 family in the discussion, and make sure that
9 we can develop a plan of action to address
10 the needs and the problems that this family
11 faces, and this kid will be able to perform
12 better academically. So I hope that you get
13 a chance to look at it.

14 It was a pleasure to see you. Thank
15 you.

16 CHANCELLOR FARINA: I love funded
17 mandates. I'm --

18 ASSEMBLYMAN ORTIZ: Let me just -- let
19 me just -- let me just put it on the record.
20 It is not an unfunded mandate. I do have a
21 funding stream. The problem is that I don't
22 know if people here will agree with me. I'd
23 love to charge 25 cents to carbohydrate
24 items, and if we can do that, we can come

1 out -- and I have the econometric model to
2 prove it -- with \$1.2 billion that will help
3 us also to address the issue that was
4 addressed by my colleague Cusick about
5 obesity, which has been another issue that
6 I've been addressing for many, many years.

7 So if you can support the surcharge on
8 sodas, we will be able to get \$1.2 billion.
9 And I welcome your support for that. Thank
10 you.

11 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you very
12 much.

13 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you. Our
14 next speaker is Senator Nozzolio.

15 SENATOR NOZZOLIO: Thank you.

16 Good afternoon, Chancellor. You were
17 asked a lot of questions about a lot of
18 different things. Here's another different
19 thing.

20 We call them, in upstate New York,
21 school resource officers. I'm not sure what
22 you call them in New York City. But do you
23 have trained retired or current police
24 officers who are involved with safety in your

1 schools?

2 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, we have
3 school safety officers in all our schools,
4 and they're trained --

5 SENATOR NOZZOLIO: In every -- and
6 that's what I wanted to know, the scope and
7 breadth of it. In every single school?

8 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Every single
9 school. And how many there are, it depends
10 on the number of students. And they're
11 trained by the NYPD, and we work in
12 conjunction with them.

13 SENATOR NOZZOLIO: And they're
14 deployed by the -- they're full-time
15 employees of the NYPD?

16 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Yes, and they --
17 again, in our high schools they tend to be,
18 depending on the number of students, anywhere
19 from 3 to 7 to 8 of them per school. But we
20 have them in every single school.

21 SENATOR NOZZOLIO: And so these are
22 paid for -- out of not your budget, but the
23 school -- but the police department budget?

24 CHANCELLOR FARINA: We pay for them;

1 the NYPD trains them.

2 SENATOR NOZZOLIO: Could you explain
3 that a little more?

4 CFO ORLANDO: Sure. We make a payment
5 to the NYPD for the service that they provide
6 us of school safety.

7 SENATOR NOZZOLIO: So reimburse them
8 dollar for dollar for what they --

9 CFO ORLANDO: Yes, we give them the
10 money for the service they provide us.

11 SENATOR NOZZOLIO: Do you have any
12 idea how many school resource -- school
13 officers there are?

14 CFO ORLANDO: I think the number is in
15 the thousands, but I don't have -- I can get
16 that for you.

17 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Yeah, it would
18 have to be at least 3,000, at least. Because
19 we have at least one in every elementary
20 school, and then middle schools and high
21 schools tend to have more.

22 And what we also do, this year in
23 particular we're working with the NYPD to
24 retrain them, because we want them also,

1 especially with our culture and climate that
2 we're trying to do, how to deescalate issues
3 as well as be there in terms of when an issue
4 does occur. So we have a very good working
5 relationship, and also many of them work with
6 students, you know, in after-school programs
7 and a multitude of other things.

8 But that is something that's in every
9 single school.

10 SENATOR NOZZOLIO: Chancellor, who
11 assigns those officers, and how is that
12 determination made?

13 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, first of
14 all, we have a level of -- there are
15 supervisors over them, and they take care of
16 the deployment and the redeployment,
17 depending on the issues in the particular
18 school. So if there's a school that is
19 perceived to have more issues, there will be
20 more what we call Level 3s, of the
21 supervisors.

22 But I'm in constant discussion with
23 the NYPD on what their roles are and what
24 they do. Principals have some ability to

1 talk to them, but in terms of evaluating
2 them, it's done through the NYPD.

3 SENATOR NOZZOLIO: And that NYPD unit
4 is specifically designed or tasked with this
5 particular skill set for officers?

6 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Absolutely. It's
7 a separate title. They're called school
8 safety agents.

9 SENATOR NOZZOLIO: And those school
10 safety agents, do they have individual posts
11 or are they to walk freely through the halls?
12 Or what is basically the modus --

13 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, the most
14 important job that they do, they serve as
15 security at the front door. You cannot get
16 into a school in New York City without
17 signing in and showing ID, including me, to
18 the school safety officer. So depending on
19 the size of the building, there is one person
20 at the desk or two people. That's their
21 first job. And that's one of their primary
22 jobs.

23 If it's a high school, they're also
24 expected to walk the building, and

1 particularly to walk the building in what
2 might be the hallways, the corridors,
3 whatever. And they have rotation posts.

4 In elementary schools, they serve more
5 as the face to the public, so that no one
6 goes in there without an appointment. You
7 have a sign-in book, as you go into a school
8 you have to sign, to show the ID. And they
9 also give you a sticker that says where
10 you're going. So if you're walking the
11 building, you have a special ID on you that
12 shows -- usually they're yellow and it says
13 "Visitor." And you have to go to where it
14 tells you that you're going.

15 So there's a lot of protocols that
16 we've put in place to ensure that they do the
17 job that they're meant to do. In high
18 schools, we've been encouraging a lot more of
19 walking the buildings in different ways and
20 engaging in conversation with kids. So you
21 don't get to see students for the first time
22 when they're in trouble, but it's a constant
23 conversation.

24 SENATOR NOZZOLIO: And that's exactly

1 the area I'd like to probe a little further,
2 that they're allowed to make conversation
3 with students, they're able to interact with
4 them and ask questions, answer questions, act
5 as role models, those kinds of things?

6 CHANCELLOR FARINA: It really depends
7 on them. And what we've been trying to get
8 principals to do is to make sure they're more
9 used as preventive than coming after the
10 fact.

11 But again, like everything else, it
12 depends on people's personalities. I went to
13 a school recently where the principal told me
14 that the school safety agent in her building
15 actually plays basketball with some of the
16 kids during lunchtime. And to me, that's an
17 ideal situation. Because if you have the
18 same eight kids who are going to get in
19 trouble all the time, get to know them first
20 so maybe that doesn't happen.

21 But that's not so much written in
22 stone; it's an individual agent and an
23 individual principal working on those
24 agreements.

1 SENATOR NOZZOLIO: Did those officers
2 engage in normal -- are those officers given
3 regular training specific to that type of
4 role?

5 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Yes, they are.
6 And last year, to enhance the role, we had
7 our first ever -- I'm a big believer in
8 celebrations, so we had our first celebration
9 for school safety officers, and we had it --
10 in order to be nominated, you had to go above
11 and beyond what the job calls for. And in
12 most cases, above and beyond, that you did
13 some kind of interaction, either with parents
14 or students, that was not part of your normal
15 job. Because we're trying to show that
16 people who go above and beyond are the people
17 who should be celebrated.

18 And actually Commissioner Bratton came
19 to the ceremony, we had all the brass coming
20 to the ceremony, they got certificates -- and
21 we're doing it again this year.

22 SENATOR NOZZOLIO: Do you have any
23 idea the total cost in the budget for this?

24 CFO ORLANDO: I can get it for you.

1 I'm sorry, I didn't bring it. I can get it
2 for you.

3 SENATOR NOZZOLIO: And I think we'll
4 certainly probe this further next week in
5 Public Protection. But this program is
6 extensive and in many cases may be needed to
7 be replicated across the state. So thank
8 you.

9 Anecdotally, do you have success
10 stories that you can relate?

11 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Yes. I'll tell
12 you we have one in elementary school that she
13 is the chief reader. Now, what is the chief
14 reader? She sits at her desk, she takes the
15 -- obviously she's a security officer. But
16 there are children every day who somehow
17 can't seem to sit still, and their job is to
18 take their read-aloud book and sit by the
19 school safety officer and read to her, and
20 she can still do her job while she's doing
21 that.

22 I gave you the example of the one in a
23 high school where he works with the kids.
24 And then there's one in a middle school where

1 there are three kids who are consistently in
2 trouble, so he mentors them on how to
3 behave -- I don't ask what that matters, you
4 know.

5 But those are the people who were
6 nominated for these awards. I'm trying to
7 think, there was another one that has been
8 doing this job for like 20-some-odd years, a
9 long time, and he mentors other school safety
10 officers on how to do the preventive stuff.
11 So there are a lot of people going above and
12 beyond. And, you know, we celebrate
13 custodians who go above and beyond.
14 Celebrating good work I think is really
15 important.

16 SENATOR NOZZOLIO: Thank you very
17 much. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

18 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you, Senator.
19 Assemblyman O'Donnell.

20 ASSEMBLYMAN O'DONNELL: Good
21 afternoon. I just want to echo everyone's
22 comments about how impressive you are. I
23 want to publicly thank the mayor for
24 convincing you to take the job and say in all

1 my years of sitting in this room I have never
2 seen any witness that is as knowledgeable and
3 as thorough as you have been here today, and
4 I want to thank you for that.

5 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Thank you. I'm
6 going to say that to my husband, who's
7 enjoying his time in Florida while I'm doing
8 this.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN O'DONNELL: Well, yeah, I
10 guess. We all have husbands. Yes, I
11 understand.

12 (Laughter.)

13 ASSEMBLYMAN O'DONNELL: So let me tell
14 you that I represent District 3 in Manhattan,
15 which is not considered a high-needs district
16 -- but I represent the northern half of
17 District 3, okay, not the elite part. The
18 northern part.

19 CHANCELLOR FARINA: I know.

20 ASSEMBLYMAN O'DONNELL: And what I
21 want to address with you is a very parochial
22 issue, but I think it gets to the heart of
23 some of the problems that we have. There are
24 two schools in my district that are

1 phenomenal schools. They have phenomenal
2 principals, they have engaged parents, they
3 are phenomenal. I would send, if I had
4 children -- I tell my constituents, send your
5 children to PS 75 and PS 163.

6 You know what the problem is? They're
7 under threat. They're under threat because
8 of building construction. They want to build
9 a 22-story nursing home 12 feet from the
10 windows of PS 163. That's as close as you
11 and I are. Right? For 26 to 30 months.
12 Okay? They want to do that by putting a
13 crane that would swing over the roof of PS
14 163.

15 At PS 75, they're intending to build
16 adjacent to the school in the next -- right
17 across the street, which is the street where
18 the children currently line up to go into
19 school. Right? PS 75 is the place where
20 that unfortunate accident took place, right?

21 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Yeah. That's the
22 Emily Dickinson School.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN O'DONNELL: That's
24 correct.

1 CHANCELLOR FARINA: And I know the
2 principal there.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN O'DONNELL: Okay.
4 Unfortunately, we have been able to get
5 nowhere with the City of New York about
6 should this be allowed. In my opinion, it
7 should be against the law to build 12 feet
8 from a public school window. And because of
9 school choice, what's going to happen if
10 these plans go forward, those schools will be
11 destroyed. PS 163 may be physically
12 destroyed if some accident occurs.

13 But we have school choice, and the
14 parents who choose to send their children to
15 a Title I school in District 3 are going to
16 bolt. They're going to bolt, Chancellor.
17 They're going to bolt. And I can't really
18 blame them.

19 So my first question to you is, do you
20 have any ability to weigh in on what is
21 happening adjacent to the property that you
22 control, with the city to say this is an
23 unacceptable thing for you to allow to
24 happen? Or do you not have any role?

1 CHANCELLOR FARINA: We don't -- we do
2 not have a role. I've been to 163 several
3 times already, so I know the situation. What
4 we were able to offer 163 is the ability to
5 give them a person, under Deputy Chancellor
6 Rose, to help oversee the construction.
7 Because they have certain things they had to
8 do -- and Gabru {ph} has been very involved
9 in this issue as well, what guidelines -- and
10 one of the things they had asked for is for
11 not having the work being done during certain
12 school hours or during arrival or dismissal
13 time. So that's the kind of thing we can
14 impact.

15 But in terms of stopping them from
16 building, that's not within our jurisdiction.

17 75 is a whole other situation. And
18 that principal is doing such a -- and that's
19 one of the few schools -- originally
20 arts-focused, with a lot of things going on
21 there that --

22 ASSEMBLYMAN O'DONNELL: Yes, my chief
23 of staff went there as an elementary school
24 student, yes.

1 CHANCELLOR FARINA: It also has one of
2 the model dual-language programs in the City
3 of New York.

4 ASSEMBLYMAN O'DONNELL: Yes, it does,
5 yes.

6 CHANCELLOR FARINA: So to me, I didn't
7 know about this PS 75 issue, and I will
8 certainly call -- Robert Ryan is still there?

9 ASSEMBLYMAN O'DONNELL: Oh, yes, he's
10 still there.

11 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Yeah, okay, so
12 I'll speak to Bob.

13 163 I'm very aware of because I've
14 been to several evening meetings there. But
15 I can get back to you specifically. But I
16 know we looked into it, and there's no way
17 that we can stop -- we can give assistance in
18 what hours they work, what kind of work they
19 do while the kids are in the building. So
20 that's the kind -- and we can give the
21 principal, which is what they asked for, help
22 so they don't have to do that aspect of the
23 job in terms of supervising.

24 ASSEMBLYMAN O'DONNELL: Well, I had

1 the distinct pleasure of being raked through
2 the coals by the New York Times Editorial
3 Board for sending a yoga teacher into the PS
4 163 when the previous construction down the
5 block was happening.

6 This construction is happening over
7 their heads. And if you and the mayor can't
8 do something to stop that construction, you
9 will destroy that school. It will become
10 what it used to be, which was a school that
11 kids only went to when their parents couldn't
12 figure out where else to send them. And that
13 would be the biggest shame in the world,
14 because Dr. Pepe and the current principal
15 have done such a phenomenal job, and those
16 parents have killed themselves. And now it's
17 all for naught. And, you know, I don't think
18 they should be allowed to build a 22-story
19 high rise within 12 feet of the windows of a
20 public school. Because I don't think there's
21 any way, while that school is occupied, for
22 those children to be safe or for them to have
23 an adequate learning environment or a safe
24 ingress or egress. There's just no way to

1 do that, given the scale of what they intend
2 to build and given the time frame.

3 And, you know, they've currently won
4 the first phase of the lawsuit the parents
5 brought, which makes me very happy. But, you
6 know, it's all very good to hear about how
7 we're going to build new schools or we're
8 going to do these new programs, and I support
9 all that 100 percent, but if we don't take
10 the jewels that we have and keep them that
11 way, we're going to end up failing in the
12 long run. And then what's going to happen is
13 all those elite schools to the south of me,
14 that's where those parents are going to start
15 demanding that their kids go, and we've been
16 through that once before.

17 Thank you very much.

18 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you.

20 Senator?

21 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you very
22 much.

23 And I just have a quick question and
24 then I'll, when the time is right, turn it

1 over to Senator Liz Krueger.

2 I appreciate all of the answers you've
3 given today; you've been very thorough. I
4 was wondering about the renewal schools. And
5 I appreciate what you've been able to allay
6 today regarding them. But I do know that
7 part of the agreement on the renewal schools
8 is to expand the school day by one hour. And
9 the question is, is that something that you
10 look toward in the future to do for all of
11 the schools across New York? And if it's
12 good for renewal schools, why is it not good
13 -- or good -- for the other schools?

14 And if you could please comment on
15 that, please.

16 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, I think
17 you're talking about finances and resources
18 and where do you put your priorities. So
19 right now the money that was made available
20 was made for our struggling schools, so
21 that's where we're starting.

22 And the other thing is that one of the
23 things we do very carefully in New York City
24 is we assess everything we do. So once this

1 year comes to an end, we will assess this
2 work, what were the results. Certainly no
3 change in public education or any education
4 takes a year. I mean, that's one thing
5 MaryEllen and I have discussed forever. We
6 don't undo years of neglect or whatever
7 overnight. This is not a magic potion.

8 So that is part of what we do. Many
9 of our schools run extra programs. But in
10 terms of systemically doing it, we really
11 have to wait and see how the resources come
12 down.

13 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: So you said you
14 will be assessing that.

15 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Absolutely.

16 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: And when you do
17 that, do you issue some sort of public
18 report? Do you just give it to the mayor?
19 Do you share it with the public? Because it
20 would be interesting to see what the results
21 of the information you receive actually is.

22 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Yeah, I think at
23 least for this year and next year it will be
24 more anecdotal, or certainly in terms of

1 being the things I would like to see
2 improved. And that will be public. Which
3 schools have improved attendance, which
4 schools are going to have teacher retention,
5 which schools have -- we have something
6 called the snapshot in quality review. We
7 evaluate all our schools. And one of the
8 things that we looked at in terms of the
9 schools' evaluations is do teachers work
10 collaboratively, is there rigorous
11 instruction. So those are evaluation tools
12 we already have in place.

13 So it's maybe making public, in the
14 renewal school roles, these evaluations in
15 terms of how they improved before they had
16 resources and now with the resources. So
17 that we can actually -- they are public.
18 They're on the internet right now. You can
19 go on and download the information from any
20 single school in New York City.

21 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: I think that would
22 be very helpful because of the
23 decision-making process that we undertake
24 here, and also just sharing information as

1 far as policy goes. So thank you for that,
2 Chancellor.

3 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Assemblyman Titone.

4 ASSEMBLYMAN TITONE: Thank you,
5 Chancellor, and good afternoon.

6 Certainly from my perspective you hit
7 on so many points that are near and dear to
8 me. But with respect to the arts -- and I
9 can tell you, I've had three requests from
10 schools for so-called discretionary funding
11 for ballroom dancing at those schools. So
12 that's great.

13 But sadly, what I'm not hearing is
14 something that I'd really -- you know, we've
15 discussed before in the past. I just want to
16 give an example. You know, for decades on
17 Staten Island, on the north shore, there's
18 been an abandoned building that over the
19 years not only the residents, the people
20 around it, but the press and -- it's just
21 been, for decades, crying "Just tear it down,
22 just tear it down before something bad
23 happens." Finally, tragically, a 16-year-old
24 boy was in the building playing, and he died.

1 Weeks later, the building finally came down.

2 I bring that up because my question is
3 with respect to transportation of our special
4 ed children. What is it going to take to
5 finally get the city to change the way we're
6 doing business when it comes to transporting
7 our children with special needs?

8 We've seen, you know, just very
9 recently on Staten Island a young boy with
10 special needs who the bus driver could not
11 find his home, despite the fact that he had
12 GPS but refused to turn it on. The bus
13 matron was of no help. This boy was on this
14 bus for over six hours without anyone
15 stopping to give him water, to let him go to
16 the bathroom, with no information to the
17 parents or to the school. And the horror
18 stories keeping coming. It was put upon the
19 parents to adjust this poor boy's behavior
20 when he refused to get on the new bus because
21 he was traumatized by his experience.

22 The horror stories keep piling on and
23 yet we're still at, you know, Point A with
24 respect to this issue. We have special-needs

1 children who are being placed on school buses
2 with general education kids, so we have
3 young, young kids with special needs being
4 placed on the school bus with high school
5 kids because that is more economically
6 feasible. What is it going to take for us to
7 change that?

8 CHANCELLOR FARINA: I mean, I am very
9 happy to set up a meeting with you to discuss
10 this issue with Deputy Chancellor Rose, but I
11 know that we have been working hard -- and to
12 be very honest, that particular family
13 emailed me directly, and I answered them
14 directly. But once again, the amount of
15 busing in New York City -- and we've just
16 added for more busing -- is a very
17 complicated issue. It's probably one of the
18 ones that, you know, is one that requires a
19 lot more -- but why don't we make an
20 appointment, and I'm happy for you to sit and
21 talk with -- because I can't be specific
22 about a whole bunch of things.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN TITONE: I understand
24 that. But I hope the urgency of which I

1 speak -- that, you know, you're coming here
2 and we're talking about the Campaign for
3 Fiscal Equity; I would like to be hearing the
4 city and you saying: We need this money,
5 Albany, so that we can change a potentially
6 very dangerous situation. We don't have the
7 money that we need to transport our special
8 education kids safely.

9 Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you.

11 Senator?

12 SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you,
13 chancellor. I think we're all very
14 appreciative both of your time here today and
15 what you're doing for the schoolchildren of
16 New York City every day. I certainly am
17 someone who can speak to the fact that your
18 administration has been incredibly
19 responsive, and the people of my district
20 appreciate that.

21 A number of issues, so many issues
22 were raised. But an earlier issue was
23 mayoral control in a one year continuation
24 versus longer. I'm just curious, since you

1 have an enormous system in New York City,
2 with a million students, is --

3 CHANCELLOR FARINA: A million plus.

4 SENATOR KRUEGER: -- a million-plus
5 students and over a thousand schools?

6 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Sixteen hundred.

7 SENATOR KRUEGER: Oh, way, way over.

8 CHANCELLOR FARINA: But who's
9 counting.

10 SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you. What
11 would it mean if suddenly at the, literally,
12 turn of a dime we didn't have mayoral
13 control? What would happen to you and these
14 over a million children?

15 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, a little bit
16 of chaos, I would think.

17 Right now I think we have the best of
18 all possible worlds. We have mayoral
19 control. And remember, a mayor campaigns on
20 his educational belief systems, so people
21 choose you because they believe you believe
22 what they believe in. And then by he or she
23 picking a chancellor who's on the same page,
24 there's a certain continuity that's just

1 going to, I think, work well for everyone.

2 I think the other thing is that I
3 believe in the law it goes back to this kind
4 of school board, if not the individual school
5 boards by district, it goes back to like a
6 receivership which would have gone back to
7 the days of, let's say, Cortines,
8 Fernandez -- I can give you all the names --
9 who on a dime might be fired because the
10 mayor wasn't happy about something they had
11 no control over, they weren't their people,
12 so they didn't work out their issues
13 together.

14 To me, what you want in a system,
15 especially if you want to improve a lot of
16 things, you want stability. You want
17 continuity in this. You want people who
18 speak with one voice. I mean, it's not just
19 the mayor and I, but it's a group now -- you
20 have UFT, CSA. We generally -- I mean,
21 there's going to be times we disagree on any
22 number of things. But isn't it better for a
23 teacher and a principal to go to work in the
24 morning and say one of the things I don't

1 have to deal with is all the politics around
2 this, everybody is on the same page?

3 So that's the best answer I can give
4 you. Because honestly, I have been around
5 for all the structures and I have seen the
6 good, the bad, and the ugly. And this, to
7 me, allows us to do things quickly,
8 comprehensively, and still with a lot of
9 community input.

10 SENATOR KRUEGER: And am I correct in
11 understanding that if this were to happen,
12 even if you're describing that we would go
13 back to a pre-system, we don't have that
14 structure. There aren't community school
15 boards. We would actually have to recreate
16 them and have separate elections. There
17 aren't separate superintendents in the old
18 definition of what they were with community
19 school board districts. So we would have to
20 literally start from scratch to rebuild any
21 system; would that be correct?

22 CHANCELLOR FARINA: We have community
23 superintendents since I've become chancellor.
24 But the thing that I think is particularly

1 meaningful is that they're instructional
2 people. They do not have to play politics,
3 they have to agree and they meet with elected
4 officials, but they're able to select what I
5 consider the right principals and focus on
6 instructional priorities rather than some of
7 the things that I, as a former district
8 superintendent, had to spend maybe more time
9 on things that were more political rather
10 than instructional.

11 So I think that's what -- you need an
12 instructional system where everyone is
13 focused on the kids and putting the kids
14 first. And I think this system does it.

15 SENATOR KRUEGER: And no system is
16 perfect, but -- not off the cuff today, but
17 do you think that you could prepare a
18 comparison list of how the New York City
19 school system is doing today as far as the
20 kind of indicators we all look at for
21 improvements in our schools compared to under
22 the old system?

23 CHANCELLOR FARINA: I think the one
24 thing I can say with certainty, because I've

1 been around long enough, is that there is
2 more equity in the system. Felix, correct me
3 if I'm wrong. I can tell you that when I was
4 a superintendent, I assumed that District 15
5 was the model. I just assumed all districts
6 ran like ours. We had a very reasonable
7 school board, we had committed principals. I
8 became a principal in District 2, some of the
9 same models.

10 And then when I became a regional
11 superintendent, I was in charge of four
12 districts. And one of the things I realized
13 is that professional development in some
14 places didn't exist, that programs were
15 chosen for all kinds of reasons, sometimes
16 other than the right person for the right
17 job. So the students in these districts
18 geographically may not all have been given
19 the best advantages, the best instruction,
20 the best teachers. And again, it's no one's
21 fault, it's just --

22 This is now about saying no matter
23 where you live in New York City, all the
24 superintendents go through the same training.

1 I personally meet with all the
2 superintendents once a month. All the PD is
3 universal for all the teachers. It's not
4 teachers in District 2 or 15, which always
5 had good PD, but it's teachers in District 7
6 and District 9 and District 12, the unanimity
7 that we have. When we open our schools to
8 each other, I expect teachers from the Bronx
9 to visit schools in Staten Island. We have
10 to learn from each other. It was two
11 separate, two uniform people that were happy,
12 were very, very happy -- District 26, very
13 happy.

14 But we need to all be happy. And we
15 need to say the best practices, the best
16 principles are universal. And I think that
17 is something that I can honestly say right
18 now is true that wasn't true in the past.

19 SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you.

20 There was discussion about middle
21 school issues earlier, and you even described
22 that people go into teaching and imagine
23 being elementary teachers or high school
24 teachers, but nobody really ever plans on

1 being a middle school teacher. For the
2 record, when I graduated high school I went
3 back to my middle school and apologized to
4 the teachers for being so God-awful, because
5 there is something about that age range --

6 CHANCELLOR FARINA: They're wonderful.
7 I love seventh-graders. But it takes a
8 certain person to see them for what they are,
9 which is they're these little imperfect
10 beings who need to express themselves, and
11 you can't take it personally.

12 SENATOR KRUEGER: Right. So my
13 curiosity, we have some K-8 schools, some in
14 my own district, District 2. I'm wondering
15 what the evaluation is from your perspective
16 of whether that helps in improving the sort
17 of -- both the continuity for young people
18 and the kind of education they're getting
19 when you don't throw them all together by
20 themselves in separate buildings.

21 CHANCELLOR FARINA: I think it really
22 depends school by school. But just as a rule
23 of thumb, it takes a certain number of
24 students in the sixth, seventh, and eighth to

1 create a good middle school culture, whether
2 it's a K-8 or a stand-alone. And anything
3 less than 300-something, you do not have the
4 special programs that middle school kids
5 have. And when there's a stand-alone middle
6 school -- but they have to be good. Whether
7 it's K-8 or what, it has to be a good school
8 with a good principal and good teachers --
9 you have kids making more independent
10 decisions. They are being maybe raised a
11 little bit more sophisticated to go on to
12 high school.

13 So it's all about the preparation for
14 high school. And I think that really depends
15 on the school. Many of our stand-alone
16 middle schools do a lot of work with high
17 schools. They give high school courses or
18 they take business to high schools. In the
19 K-8, in some of the schools they do that too,
20 but in others they're more babied or
21 whatever.

22 So I don't want to say -- it depends
23 on the schools. But I went to a K-8 school;
24 however, I see the merits in stand-alone

1 middle schools. I do think that there's a
2 lot to be said for the opportunities, the
3 choices that kids can make. There's
4 certainly after-school programs, the arts and
5 all other things. So pretty much individual
6 decisions.

7 SENATOR KRUEGER: And finally, I
8 applaud you for what you're doing to expand
9 young people's opportunities to prepare for
10 college and go to college, particularly those
11 students who may be the first generation to
12 even consider college in their family,
13 perhaps new Americans where there's no one in
14 the family who even has any kind of, you
15 know, experience to offer their own children
16 when attempting to go to college.

17 I urge you, when you're doing this
18 work, because we see it as so broadly out
19 there in New York City, we need to make sure
20 these students are being encouraged,
21 supported, directed into quality education
22 post-high school. Too many of the
23 proprietary schools are great at convincing
24 young people to sign on the dotted line, use

1 up their TAP, their Pell, any loan money they
2 might have, to join them in their, quote,
3 unquote, educational institutions, and then
4 completely fail to provide the actual
5 education. Then the students find themselves
6 having used up their money, potentially in
7 debt for the rest of their lives, with no
8 education.

9 And I say that from experience, that
10 it is the exact population that you want to
11 help go to real colleges that gets sucked in
12 so easily by the fake schools. So I hope
13 that you are building in that reality to what
14 you're doing.

15 CHANCELLOR FARINA: I think that's
16 really one of the trainings that we're giving
17 the guidance counselors at the high schools
18 in terms of preparing kids for college. It's
19 also why we need more mentorships and
20 internships, different kinds, at that level
21 so that if they have someone who's -- one of
22 the things we're hoping is happening today in
23 a lot of schools, as teachers talk about
24 where they went to college and what they

1 learned at college, that they can make that
2 statement. But I'm certainly very cognizant
3 of that.

4 SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you very much.

5 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you.

6 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: I believe Senator
7 Marcellino has one more follow-up question,
8 or maybe more.

9 SENATOR MARCELLINO: No, just one.

10 Chancellor, you talked about
11 suspensions, and I remembered back when I was
12 teaching and we had a rule -- I was the dean
13 of students at the time. You couldn't be the
14 dean of boys, you had to be the dean of
15 students. A suspension was for five days
16 max. And the principal was the only one who
17 could suspend. I could recommend. The
18 teacher could beg; they couldn't do anything
19 about it. They would come to me, I would
20 pull the kid out, we'd talk to the child. If
21 it was something really serious, we brought
22 it to the principal, who would have to make
23 the recommendation. But five days was max.
24 You couldn't do it for longer than that

1 unless there was an arrest involved and
2 something else took over.

3 You were talking about 20 days or a
4 time like that. When did that arrive?

5 CHANCELLOR FARINA: This is one of the
6 reasons why we're redoing our suspension
7 policy, because it was a little all over the
8 place. So we're going to come out with new
9 protocols on how many days you can do it for
10 and what is the infraction, and then it has
11 to be aligned with the number of days. And
12 also who you need to get permission from in
13 order to do it. Because there has to be a
14 protocol in terms of is it the principal --
15 we have principal suspensions, now we have
16 superintendent suspensions.

17 But there has to be -- again, when I'm
18 talking about equity, it's not just about
19 equity of teachers, it's equity of our
20 suspensions. There has to be a fairness
21 around the city that your suspension is not
22 dependent on the neighborhood you live in.
23 So that's one of the things we're working on.

24 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Okay, thank you.

1 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you. Thank
2 you very much.

3 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you,
4 Chancellor.

5 (Scattered applause.)

6 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Thank you. I
7 appreciate the ability to come before you,
8 because also now that I know that you're
9 listening, I'm going to send you my requests
10 in writing. Thank you.

11 (Laughter.)

12 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: 11:30, United
13 Federation of Teachers, UFT, Michael Mulgrew,
14 president; New York State United Teachers,
15 NYSUT, Andrew Pallotta, executive vice
16 president, and Christopher Black, director of
17 legislation. Are you here?

18 (Discussion off the record.)

19 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Yes, we are ready.
20 Folks, can we move it out?

21 (Discussion off the record.)

22 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Good afternoon.

23 MR. PALLOTTA: Good afternoon.

24 Senator Young, Assemblyman Farrell, Chairs

1 Marcellino and Nolan, members of the Assembly
2 and Senate, I am Andy Pallotta. I'm the
3 executive vice president of NYSUT,
4 representing over 600,000 members from
5 throughout New York State in K-12 education
6 and higher education, healthcare, and our
7 retirees.

8 Thank you for the opportunity to be
9 here today on the proposed 2016-2017 budget.
10 With me is Michael Mulgrew, president of UFT,
11 also Chris Black, the political and
12 legislative director of NYSUT, and Cassy
13 Prugh, the legislative director of UFT.

14 Public education I feel is going
15 finally in the right direction. And moving
16 that way, we would hope to continue to work
17 together with the members of the Assembly and
18 the Senate to ensure that every child in this
19 state receives a great education.

20 We must continue to reduce testing in
21 this state and ensure that any remaining
22 tests are solely diagnostic in nature. We
23 must restore the joy of teaching and learning
24 for our children and for our teachers.

1 I will summarize my testimony. First,
2 school aid. While the proposed school aid
3 increase of \$961 million is one of the
4 largest we've seen in recent memory, we also
5 have to point out that we have to
6 significantly see much more going into this
7 budget. This year in particular, we have a
8 state support of schools that is crucial.
9 The tax cap is near zero; actually, it's a
10 mere 0.12 percent, not even 2 percent. This
11 devastatingly low tax cap will cripple local
12 ability to raise funds. Under a true
13 2 percent tax cap, \$700 million would have
14 been generated, which could have been used to
15 offset what the state will have to make up
16 for.

17 A significant increase in school aid
18 can be supported by the state. New York is
19 no longer running a deficit and instead has a
20 surplus of \$5.4 billion, half of which is
21 recurring revenue. New York public school
22 students are still owed \$4.4 billion in
23 Foundation Aid and \$434 million in GEA
24 funding. An increase of \$1.7 billion in

1 school aid is needed just to keep things as
2 they are, the current levels of programs.
3 NYSUT is calling for an increase of
4 \$2.6 billion in general-purpose school aid.
5 This includes a \$2.1 billion increase in
6 Formula Aid and \$500 million in targeted
7 funding.

8 The \$2.1 billion in Formula Aid is
9 needed to greatly increase Foundation Aid,
10 eliminate the GEA, and fully fund
11 expense-based aid. This \$500 million in
12 funding would go for support of struggling
13 schools, for support for English language
14 learners, expansion of pre-K programs,
15 high-quality professional development, and
16 for college and career pathways and CTE. We
17 also request full payments of the
18 \$318 million in prior-year aid claims that
19 are owed to school districts.

20 On the tax cap, we have said that it
21 is very problematic. Living under this cap,
22 most districts throughout this state are not
23 able to restore cuts that have been made.
24 The tax cap also hurts our poorest districts

1 the most, placing severe limits on their
2 ability to raise funds.

3 To address this problem, we urge
4 modifications to the current law which would
5 include changing the tax limit to 2 percent
6 or CPI, whichever is greater; eliminating the
7 supermajority requirement; eliminating the
8 possibility of negative tax caps; and
9 providing exemptions for increased
10 enrollment, school security, BOCES capital
11 expenses, and preventing PILOTs from
12 negatively impacting tax levy limits.

13 On community schools, we've heard a
14 lot today about this model. We support and
15 appreciate the proposed \$100 million for
16 community schools, for conversion from
17 struggling and high-needs schools, but
18 obviously there is much more to be done. We
19 would also ensure that community schools have
20 the wrap-around services that they need.

21 We must work together to ensure that
22 any action taken to support community
23 schools' conversion takes into account the
24 unique needs of small and rural schools.

1 Under the proposed formula, a high-needs
2 rural school district could receive only
3 \$22,000, not enough for real change.
4 Therefore, we request an additional
5 \$75 million be provided for struggling
6 schools and other high-needs schools
7 throughout the state.

8 On receivership, we call for repeal of
9 the receivership law and for supportive and
10 collaborative community school models to
11 replace this current punitive statute. The
12 state has acknowledged concerns with the
13 implementation of the new state standardized
14 tests, and just like the prohibition on the
15 use of certain state tests and decisions for
16 students and teachers, the state should
17 provide the same delay for districts. The
18 decision for districts to be placed on a
19 struggling schools list should not be even
20 partly determined by student performance on
21 invalid state tests or by test scores.

22 Further, the \$75 million previously
23 allocated for struggling schools was released
24 six months late. Instead of the required

1 July 1, 2015, the funds were finally released
2 only a couple of weeks ago. And the removal
3 of dedicated teachers from their profession
4 is a very harmful practice. Teachers in
5 receivership schools often feel punished, and
6 these educators have devoted their lives to
7 the high-needs schools that they work in.

8 We also should not attack collective
9 bargaining in these schools. In fact, the
10 high-needs receivership schools are owed more
11 than \$2.7 billion in Foundation Aid and GEA
12 combined.

13 Teacher centers, something close and
14 dear to my heart. At a time when we are
15 asking so much more of teachers and educators
16 in the field, we must provide them with the
17 tools that they need. The Executive Budget
18 eliminates completely all funding for teacher
19 centers. Funding for these centers is
20 crucial, and we call on the Legislature to
21 restore funding to the 2008-2009 levels of
22 \$40 million.

23 On the Parental Choice in Education
24 Act, we continue to oppose this, which

1 creates a back-door voucher program and
2 constitutionally questionable tuition tax
3 credit. The Education Scholarship and
4 Program Tax Credit drives \$70 million to
5 corporations and the wealthy, who would
6 receive a tax credit equal to 75 percent of
7 their authorized contributions, up to an
8 astounding credit of \$1 million. The Family
9 Choice Education Tax Credit would also set
10 aside another \$70 million to provide a \$500
11 per student refundable personal income tax
12 credit. We urge you to reject this.

13 On charter schools, New York public
14 schools are still struggling financially.
15 Currently one-third of these districts still
16 receive less than they did in 2009-2010, and
17 nearly a combined total of \$5 billion is
18 still owed to these schools.

19 Despite this, the budget increases for
20 all charter schools and unfreezes per-pupil
21 aid for New York City schools. We do not
22 support the continued increase in charter
23 school tuition, especially without
24 accountability. And you should consider the

1 fact that companies that operate charter
2 schools have hundreds of millions of dollars
3 in reserve. Contrary to many reports, there
4 is nothing in the budget proposal that
5 strengthens accountability for charter
6 schools to enroll and educate ELL students
7 and students with disabilities.

8 On Career and Tech Ed, we must
9 continue to support and expand access to CTE
10 programs. Therefore, we fully support
11 increasing the aidable salary for all CTE
12 programs and increasing BOCES aid for Special
13 Services Aid.

14 We urge the Legislature to provide
15 regular, predictable increases in the tuition
16 rates of 4201, 4410, 853 and Special Act
17 schools, and assist them in achieving parity
18 with surrounding school districts.

19 In conclusion, we look forward to
20 partnering with the Legislature to ensure
21 that all of our students throughout this
22 great state receive the best education that
23 they can, and we know that the best
24 investment we can make is in the future of

1 our students.

2 Thank you.

3 MR. MULGREW: Thank you, Mr. Pallotta.

4 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you.

5 MR. MULGREW: I have submitted our
6 testimony, and I'll try to make this quick
7 because I know everyone has been working
8 diligently today.

9 I want to first thank the chairs:
10 Assemblywoman Nolan, Senator Marcellino,
11 Assemblyman Farrell, and Senator Young.
12 Thank you very much for having this hearing
13 today. And it's been a long -- this is my
14 eighth year, which I consider a long time at
15 this point, and we've come a long way. And
16 the last year has been quite contentious at
17 certain times, but right now we're seeing a
18 ray of light.

19 But I am here to represent New York
20 City, first and foremost. And as I am so
21 proud of hearing my chancellor's presentation
22 just before me, I also know that our level of
23 need in New York City is continuing to grow.
24 And when I say the level of need, I'm talking

1 about the need of our students as well as the
2 size of our school system.

3 A lot recently has been written about
4 homelessness in New York City. I can tell
5 you right now that 84,000 children last year
6 in New York City at some point were involved
7 in temporary housing, and on average, every
8 night of the school year, 28,000 children
9 will be sleeping in a temporary housing
10 facility. At the same time, our numbers and
11 percentages of students with disabilities as
12 well as English language learners are growing
13 exponentially. These are responsibilities
14 that we take on as the educators of the City
15 of New York public school system. And we
16 take that very seriously. But we also know
17 that it does make a difference when it comes
18 to funding how to service these children.

19 And we have made great strides over
20 the last couple of years. I know the mayor
21 was up here yesterday talking about our
22 graduation rate. You heard from the
23 chancellor today about all of the different
24 things and programs that we are implementing

1 to deal with all of the children's needs in
2 our city.

3 But I also was up here a couple of
4 times already this legislative session, and I
5 heard a lot about GEA, which is great. I
6 believe every child should be funded what the
7 state owes them. But I don't hear a lot
8 about CFE. And the Contract for Excellence
9 is something that we feel very strong about.
10 We want every child to be fully funded. We
11 believe that the legislature should adhere to
12 a settlement, a court settlement, and we are
13 hoping that this is this the year that this
14 gets done, because we are moving in the right
15 direction in New York City but we still have
16 a lot to do.

17 We have a capital plan that needs to
18 be pushed up even further. As we know, we
19 still have children -- despite the gains
20 we've made recently, we still have a lot of
21 children inside of temporary school
22 facilities, trailers. And right now, for the
23 last two years, we are now at a 15-year high
24 in our class size for pre-K through 3. We

1 like the fact that we have pre-K for all, and
2 we like the Governor's proposal to do it
3 across this entire state. But that also
4 includes funding that goes with that.

5 So we are hoping at this point, we are
6 very strong about our belief that the
7 Legislature should make sure that there is a
8 real down payment this year on CFE. And it's
9 not just the money amount, it is also the
10 adherence of the plans that school districts
11 have submitted with them to be followed.
12 Class size is a major issue inside of New
13 York City, as I am telling you. We're
14 overcrowded, that's one issue. But even when
15 we can reduce classes, we're not doing it.
16 And if we receive this money, we want to make
17 sure that it is going towards things that we
18 know will make an educational difference.

19 One year ago today I sat before you
20 and I was basically giving you a lot of
21 research and facts about proposals that I was
22 vehemently against. We right now are at a
23 better place. We support the Governor's
24 commission and their recommendations, but

1 that's going to require a lot of work. I do
2 believe it is in our state's best interest to
3 develop their own standards and develop
4 standards by working with all of the
5 stakeholders -- with parents, with
6 administrators, with teachers, and making
7 sure that it's just not a basic set of
8 standards but we're also designing
9 standards -- and this has never been done
10 before -- making sure that we're supplying
11 our school districts with standards for
12 students with disabilities as well as English
13 language learners. Because we cannot
14 continue to leave those segments of our
15 student population behind and leave the
16 teachers to fend for themselves.

17 So to do all of this work, we know
18 that is going to require funding. If the
19 Board of Regents has adopted an action plan
20 to redesign all of the standards for New York
21 State, come up with basic curriculums that
22 match all of those standards, have a training
23 regimen put into a calendar so that all
24 school districts have the ability to train --

1 unlike last time, where we just said, Here's
2 the new standards, here's the new tests, good
3 luck. And we want to get it right this time.

4 So I'm up here and right now in
5 New York City, we have 70 teachers who are
6 volunteering after school and on weekends and
7 are looking at those standards and taking
8 that all apart. But we know that that work
9 is not going to get done without funding.
10 Teacher Centers is an important piece, it's a
11 very important piece to this budget, as well
12 as designing an actual plan to get this work
13 done for the entire state. New York City
14 would be more than happy to share any of the
15 work that we do with the rest of the state,
16 that is my word to all of you.

17 And when it also comes to Teacher
18 Centers, I want to get to the piece on
19 receivership that my colleague just spoke
20 about. Receivership is a very difficult
21 issue. New York City has a very aggressive
22 plan. We started a plan -- before the law
23 was passed last year, we already started a
24 plan to make changes. You have to have an

1 educational support system, which is once
2 again where Teacher Centers come in. We are
3 doing community learning school work.

4 But I cannot emphasize enough what my
5 colleague just said. We all talk about this.
6 And we call them renewal schools in New York
7 City, not failing schools. And if we
8 continue to use this as a focal point to
9 attack the staffs at the schools -- I am
10 telling you right now the most difficult
11 thing we have is attracting teachers to these
12 schools, because they're like, Well, aren't
13 those the schools they always write bad
14 things about?

15 If we want our best and brightest
16 inside of these schools, we have to give them
17 the supports, we have to give them the
18 services. We make no excuses, we know -- and
19 we were very happy to see in the State of the
20 State address that there is a recognition
21 that poverty matters when it comes to
22 education. We want those services, we need
23 them to be targeted for our students' needs.
24 But to continue and act like we can have this

1 conversation here and say we need this, but
2 at the same time say we have to go after
3 those failing schools, acting like that does
4 not give us a problem at the level inside of
5 the communities to try to get people to do
6 this difficult work would be a little bit
7 disingenuous.

8 So I am asking that we do something to
9 look at that law, talk about what these
10 services are. We support the community
11 learning school model. You know that. I was
12 up here five years ago talking to you about
13 what we were doing in New York City, asking
14 for funding. We run -- the union in New York
15 City runs 26 of its own. We are very proud
16 of that model. We already have PS 335 in
17 Brooklyn. Four years ago, everyone was
18 looking at it, it was a horrible school, on
19 closure lists. Now it's doing very well. It
20 has its services. It has educational
21 supports that are needed. We have a resource
22 coordinator based in the building talking to
23 the community as well as to the staff and
24 making sure everything is being coordinated

1 the right way. That is how you make
2 community learning schools work.

3 It should not be just the state
4 throwing money at schools, saying boilerplate
5 here's these services, this is what you need.
6 You need to engage the community in the
7 process. That is the way to do it.

8 And in terms of what I heard a lot
9 already in the questions about school
10 discipline, as a teacher, it always goes like
11 this. First it was zero tolerance, now it's
12 zero discipline. We can't play politics with
13 this. This is tough work. Okay? Zero
14 tolerance sounded nice for a little while, a
15 whole bunch of people got behind it, student
16 suspensions went up, parents were outraged,
17 it was not the right approach.

18 The only way to truly do this work is
19 with a school-based cultural approach. We
20 are asking this year for a new program, a
21 program we've been running for two years as a
22 pilot in New York City, the union, just as I
23 came to you five years ago with community
24 learning schools. It's called the positive

1 learning community. We embed a behavior
2 specialist and the schools, the 15 schools in
3 New York City that are now running this, we
4 clearly have positive results, suspensions
5 are down. And the surveys about how people
6 feel about the school are way up.

7 It's not easy work, and you're always
8 going to hear these debates, number of
9 suspensions. Remember when No Child Left
10 Behind came out, how did a school get in
11 trouble? If it reported incidents. So what
12 happened? Nobody reported an incident. And
13 then all of a sudden nobody's having an
14 incident because they don't want to be on a
15 persistently dangerous list.

16 It's time to get common sense into the
17 discussion. If we want to make a difference
18 at the school level in terms of discipline,
19 it's not easy, but we have to have people
20 there who are guiding the school through this
21 process, and that's why we are asking for
22 this.

23 Career and Technical Education. For
24 those of you who know me, and I like the

1 support that I've heard about this all day,
2 it is something that it has been moving in
3 the right direction but I believe New York
4 State is on the precipice to take this to a
5 place no state has before. You heard the
6 chancellor talk about this; there are some
7 impediments in current regulations, more
8 about the licensing and certification of
9 teachers, about how the system is slightly
10 archaic when it comes to all of the new areas
11 for Career and Technical Education.

12 We are absolutely in the business of
13 making sure that we develop more of these
14 programs. The business community works with
15 us hand in hand on these, developing these.
16 And it's a lot of -- and I have to say, in
17 terms of being an educator, it's just a lot
18 of fun. It's a lot of fun to go to a CTE
19 school and see what's going on, see the
20 excitement, see the different things. And if
21 you haven't been able to do that, just get in
22 touch with me and I'm sure myself or
23 Assemblywoman Nolan has a couple of schools
24 that we could bring you to rather quickly.

1 Now my topic which we always have fun
2 with every year: Charter schools. I will
3 start. I will never paint the charter
4 schools with a broad brush. There are
5 independent charters, there are charter
6 chains. But in terms of any sort of
7 legislative proposals that include anything
8 with giving charter schools any more funding,
9 I am vehemently against.

10 When I was here last year, one of the
11 few things I did support was the idea of
12 finally creating what was called then
13 anti-creaming language. And the only thing
14 that was created at the end of the
15 legislative session was that the management's
16 children, their families now had preference
17 over children from the district. This is
18 absurd. You want to be a public school, take
19 all kids and keep them. And in New York City
20 you compound that with the fact that we now
21 have to supply space, valuable public school
22 space. And when their attrition rates are
23 going up every year, there are empty seats in
24 their classes, yet our public school children

1 are sitting in the same buildings, completely
2 overcrowded.

3 It's time to stop the games. It's
4 that simple. All children, and keep all
5 children. That's that we're asking for. And
6 I can't make it any plainer than that.

7 In terms of revenue, as I said last
8 year and I will say again this year, we know
9 that everything we ask for costs money. We
10 believe that we should look at closing all
11 sorts of different tax loopholes that we have
12 in our state. The hedge funds and the
13 carried interest is something we brought to
14 you many times before, as well as I do not
15 believe that people who are not residents of
16 our state should get all sorts of tax
17 exemptions and tax preference on their
18 residences. If you don't live here but you
19 want to own property here, you shouldn't get
20 the tax incentives that a resident should
21 get. It's that simple to me.

22 And I can't thank you all enough for
23 all of the work that we have been able to do
24 together over the past year, and I look

1 forward to working with all of you this
2 legislative session.

3 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NOLAN: Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you.

5 Cathy Nolan, Assemblywoman Nolan.

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NOLAN: Just quickly,
7 thank you for your testimony today. And I
8 know we have a lot of witnesses yet to go,
9 but I was asked by a number of my colleagues
10 to get your opinion on what Commissioner Elia
11 talked about in teacher evaluations. Are we
12 seeing a level of participation? How do you
13 think her looking at new perspectives for
14 developing teacher evaluations is going, and
15 your perspective on what she's doing in test
16 development and her comments that the tests
17 are diagnostic?

18 So I don't know if you were here for
19 her testimony, but she did reference several
20 times that she's trying to include teachers
21 in everything she does going forward, whether
22 it's evaluations, whether it's test
23 development and how we use those tests.

24 So, I don't know, maybe Andy rather

1 than Michael. But whoever wants to respond.
2 Did I get it right, Harry? Okay. So some of
3 our colleagues who are not on the committee,
4 we try to ask questions for them. Because we
5 have a big group here and we're trying to
6 speed it along. So I'm really just helping
7 out here.

8 MR. MULGREW: Okay, fine. Yes, I can
9 tell you, as a matter of fact, that the
10 commissioner has been very open about making
11 sure that teachers are involved in all the
12 different parts of the different processes
13 and discussions that are happening. That is
14 very nice because that's not always what
15 happened.

16 Quite frankly, what would happen is at
17 the end of the process they would invite
18 teachers to look at what they did and then
19 say thank you. And that is not what is going
20 on at this point.

21 The company that is designing the
22 tests that will not start until next year has
23 already reached out to us as well as to NYSUT
24 and has asked us for a group of our members

1 to talk to them about different --
2 development of different questions and how to
3 do this and making sure it's diagnostic, as
4 well as about how to administer a test.
5 Because that's another thing that seems to be
6 finally on the radar, about how -- it's not
7 just the test design, but the administration
8 of the test has a lot to do with how a child
9 will perform. So this commissioner has been
10 very open about it.

11 MR. PALLOTTA: I also want to thank
12 you for your work on the task force,
13 Assemblywoman Nolan and Senator Marcellino.
14 The findings were very helpful to our
15 membership and to our schools throughout the
16 state, and we know it was a lot of work. And
17 we just wanted to relay the appreciation for
18 what you did.

19 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NOLAN: Well, I got to
20 go to New Rochelle, I had never been, so --
21 in my tenure on this committee, the 10 years
22 I've chaired the committee, I've been to an
23 awful lot of the parts of the state I had
24 never seen, a girl from Queens. So

1 New Rochelle was pretty nice.

2 So yes, we did attend a lot of
3 hearings, Senator Marcellino and I, and I
4 think it was a more collaborative process.
5 And I think, you know, we're kind of moving
6 forward, I think, in allaying parents'
7 anxiety about the tests and stuff. Thank
8 you.

9 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you very
10 much.

11 Welcome to NYSUT and UFT. So happy to
12 have you here today. I know that Senator
13 Marcellino, as chair of the Senate Education
14 Committee, has some questions or comments.
15 So Senator?

16 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thank you,
17 Chairman.

18 Gentlemen, lady, appreciate you coming
19 in, appreciate your patience. It's been a
20 long day. We were supposed to be out of here
21 about three hours ago. I think we expect it
22 will take a little bit longer.

23 You may know I was a UFT delegate when
24 I was a teacher, and then when I moved into

1 administration, transferred over to the dark
2 side and became a CSA member.

3 MR. MULGREW: We always need a good
4 administrator. Always.

5 SENATOR MARCELLINO: We always need
6 good -- amen to that. Never crossed a picket
7 line in my life, never will.

8 This renewal school negotiations
9 relative to the city, how have the negotiated
10 changes impacted the teachers? Is it
11 working, is it not working? I know longer
12 days were part of that, and other things. Is
13 there an effect that you can point to? Are
14 the teachers reacting in any way, pro or con,
15 on these things?

16 MR. MULGREW: There's two schools that
17 we did a radical change, Boys & Girls and
18 Automotive High School. And the other
19 94 schools, it was more of a spending extra
20 time coming up with a plan, looking at your
21 data, targeting it and moving it forward.

22 It really is -- first, it's a process
23 of trying to help, you know -- there is the
24 we came here to teach and they're blaming us

1 for everything. And you have to get through
2 that part of it first, the union as well as
3 the Department of Ed. But the union really
4 has invested a lot and we now have a separate
5 department who goes there. We have a retreat
6 this weekend where half of those schools are
7 coming away with us for two nights.

8 It is working, because you had to
9 create a team approach and get past the --
10 and let's just be frank about it, you had
11 15 years in the United States where most
12 people weren't saying nice things about
13 teachers. So this was added on in terms of
14 we chose to work in really difficult
15 situations, and now here they come again. So
16 it was getting past that process first.

17 We do have an issue, though, with
18 trying to attract teachers into these
19 buildings. That is just factual. And that
20 is what scares me more than anything else,
21 and where we want now to use the teachers who
22 are in the building who really understand
23 that this is a process more about our
24 profession and showing folks that the most

1 difficult teaching you can do is probably in
2 a high-poverty area. That is the most
3 difficult job a teacher in the United States
4 probably can do. And take that on as a badge
5 of honor and a responsibility. It's more
6 that, that overcoming that -- the psychology
7 of it that has been problematic.

8 In terms of the work, they just, you
9 know, extra hour, we'll figure it out, roll
10 up our sleeves. How do we integrate with a
11 CBO? Great. Somebody's here to help,
12 finally. They're coming and telling us what
13 to do, they're asking us what we want.
14 That's been a huge change.

15 So we're happy at this point, we're
16 seeing positive movement, but we're going to
17 wait to see exactly what the data shows.

18 SENATOR MARCELLINO: How has the
19 waivers relative to the delay -- the task
20 force recommended four years in the APPR
21 application. And during that time,
22 negotiations are supposed to be occurring
23 between the boards, superintendents,
24 whatever, and the teachers and parents and

1 the like. Is this in fact happening?

2 MR. PALLOTTA: Well, we appreciate the
3 waivers, that's for sure, because this mean
4 word that we used to describe the evaluation
5 system for the past couple of years has been
6 debacle, disaster -- most of them started
7 with a D.

8 So what we have here is the entire
9 state looking to the Legislature to make
10 changes. You were able to give that
11 responsibility to the Regents, the Regents
12 have acted upon that, you have made your
13 recommendations through the task force.

14 I believe that in my conversations
15 today with superintendents and school boards
16 here, there is still a lot of confusion, so
17 they definitely need guidance on what they
18 should be doing for that September 1st
19 deadline.

20 MR. MULGREW: I can answer that yes,
21 we are negotiating. And I also think that
22 there's an opportunity here, because of your
23 work on the commission. I think as a state
24 now, the next challenge and the next debate

1 really is what is authentic student learning.
2 And that's what we should be headed towards,
3 where most people have not. They've said
4 that student learning is a test score or you
5 have nothing. And I think New York State is
6 ready to tackle that. Most people have not
7 been willing to tackle that.

8 But as you know as an educator,
9 project-based learning, students doing all
10 sorts of different portfolio and consortium
11 work. And I believe New York State is
12 willing now, because we see this political
13 willingness to do this, to move forward on
14 tackling the question of what is real student
15 learning. And we want that as part of
16 teacher evaluation. We all understand the
17 debate on the test scores, and we've been
18 pretty forthcoming about our feelings on it,
19 both what real student learning is -- and
20 teacher evaluation is not just about real
21 student learning, it's also about the
22 development of the individual teacher. It's
23 supposed to be a support system. Yet that
24 never enters the conversation. It never

1 enters it. It's all about, well, are you
2 good, are you bad, and what are we doing with
3 bad. And it's supposed to be a development
4 and support system. And also what is real
5 student learning.

6 And I think we are having these
7 conversations. We've had negotiating
8 sessions on this already in New York City.

9 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Your people in
10 your -- the people who look to you for
11 protection, look to you for guidance and the
12 like, I've heard back from many of my
13 constituents, and they're not unhappy,
14 they're happy with the way both your
15 unions are being run. I get positive
16 feedback from both sides, from NYSUT and from
17 my UFT constituents. So you're obviously
18 doing something right.

19 All I can suggest to you is the door
20 is always open. If you need anything or want
21 to talk about something, whatever it is, give
22 us a ring. There will be a positive answer
23 to that, and we'll try to help you out as
24 best we can.

1 MR. MULGREW: Thank you very much. I
2 appreciate that. And I'll take you up on it.

3 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Do that.

4 MR. PALLOTTA: Thank you.

5 SENATOR MARCELLINO: Thanks for
6 coming. Appreciate your time.

7 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you very
8 much.

9 Assemblyman Murray.

10 ASSEMBLYMAN MURRAY: Thank you,
11 Mr. Chairman.

12 Thank you for coming. I'll be quick,
13 because it has been long day. But a little
14 earlier I spoke to -- Commissioner Elia was
15 here and I brought up the issue regarding
16 testing, testing this year and the opt-out
17 movement and those sorts of issues.

18 There's a feeling among parents, and
19 I'll tell you I've been contacted by some
20 teachers as well, and it's why are we doing
21 this this year when it's not going to count
22 for the evaluations, it's not going to count
23 for the grade scores. Now, the
24 commissioner -- and I don't want to -- I'm

1 not going to get into evaluating her
2 response, but it was troublesome in that it
3 sounded again like all of the evaluations or
4 all of the assessments for the students come
5 down to this test. And, you know, I would
6 think that assessments are ongoing,
7 constantly, by the teachers who are the
8 professionals.

9 So it still troubles me when the
10 answer was yeah, we should still be doing the
11 tests because of the assessment. I think
12 it's ongoing. So I kind of want to get that
13 off my chest, because as I was having that
14 discussion, I received a message from a
15 teacher who messaged and said yeah, okay, the
16 evaluations have been delayed a little, but
17 I'm still getting evaluated on local tests
18 and they're still going to be test-centric
19 evaluations. And that's troublesome.

20 So I wanted to hear your feedback,
21 what you're hearing from your members,
22 because you brought up an excellent,
23 excellent point, authentic learning. You
24 know, learning today is -- it's just evolved

1 to a point where it involves so much. It's
2 teaching these kids what happens when they
3 graduate, where do they go from there. We
4 talk about CTE, we talk about whether you're
5 college-ready. But there's so many different
6 aspects and branches that they could go off
7 on, what is authentic learning?

8 That's my concern. And I'm getting
9 the feeling you're hearing the same thing,
10 but I'd like to hear, are you hearing this
11 from your members, that the concern is it's
12 still going to be test-centric?

13 MR. PALLOTTA: Well, I agree with your
14 statement, and we are hearing the same thing
15 from our members. So the fear is that this
16 will continue. And I believe that the task
17 force and the Regents will undertake to
18 reduce the amount of testing, to shorten
19 testing, and to make it a nonpunitive system
20 of testing. This is what has to be done.

21 This has been the outcry from, as you
22 said, the opt-out movement. They have said
23 that this is a ridiculous way to run a school
24 system. They've voiced their opinions and

1 they made them very loud. So we agree with
2 the parents that this should not be what our
3 schools are all about.

4 MR. MULGREW: In terms -- the federal
5 law has now changed, okay, so there is no
6 longer a requirement to use standardized
7 tests in teacher evaluation. The federal law
8 only makes a requirement of giving a
9 standardized test each year, for
10 informational purposes only. So the federal
11 government has clearly sent a signal.

12 In terms of teachers, the idea --
13 remember, standardized tests have been here,
14 but it's supposed to be a diagnostic. And the
15 minute you put any stakes on it, it is no
16 longer a diagnostic.

17 And New York City is a perfect
18 example. The political rhetoric was social
19 promotion needs to go away, we need to use
20 tests. So we got rid of social promotion,
21 which was a great little political term. But
22 the fact of the matter is once we used the
23 tests as the only, the only criteria for
24 promotion, more kids were promoted than ever

1 and less were left back when you took the
2 discretion away from the teacher to say
3 whether the child is actually ready to move
4 forward. That little fact never gets out
5 into the media.

6 So the get-tough-and-use-the-test
7 actually did the exact opposite from what it
8 was purported to do when they were running
9 the campaign to make that happen.

10 So I do believe -- what is real
11 student -- right now, this week, you have
12 some schools in our state, most of them in
13 New York City, consortium schools, who are
14 doing their end-term exams. Their exams are
15 a student has to stand in front of a group of
16 educators and actually go over whatever
17 theory, hypothesis, whatever the work they
18 were doing, challenging it. And it is one of
19 the most difficult things I have ever seen.
20 It is much more difficult than any Regents or
21 standardized test. That's authentic student
22 learning. It's a lot more work on the
23 teacher's behalf, but they like it. And they
24 know it's real.

1 And that's where I hope I see our
2 state starting to move. The first step was
3 the commission saying enough, it's not right,
4 pause. But the pause will be over, you know,
5 because -- like, oh, it's four years. But
6 you know, we'll be sitting here in four
7 years, God willing, and I'd rather be at that
8 point or before that point saying this is
9 what New York State now stands for in
10 education.

11 ASSEMBLYMAN MURRAY: And I agree with
12 that, and I think that's the -- the pause
13 button has been hit, that's great. But we
14 have work to do during that pause. And if
15 we're not moving in that direction -- and I
16 think we have a lot of work on all sides, us
17 included, in letting your members know that,
18 you know, it shouldn't be test-centric, it
19 should be authentic learning. It should be
20 about building a future for these kids. And
21 I think we all need to do a better job of
22 letting your members know that, you know,
23 they're the professionals. You know, let
24 them teach. And we can rely on them because

1 we have some of the best teachers around.

2 So thank you for coming today.

3 MR. PALLOTTA: Thank you.

4 MR. MULGREW: Thank you very much.

5 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you.

6 Senator?

7 SENATOR KRUEGER: No one here. Any
8 Assembly?

9 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Mr. Abinanti,
10 Assemblyman Abinanti.

11 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: Thank you,
12 Mr. Chairman.

13 I just want to very briefly discuss
14 one subject that has been given very short
15 shrift today, and that's special-needs
16 education in traditional schools. And I
17 don't see anybody on the agenda either who's
18 going to discuss that topic. So I'd like to
19 raise it with you gentlemen. I know you
20 mentioned it very briefly in your comments.
21 But I want to put it in the context of a tax
22 cap and minimal increase in state aid.

23 Being a parent of a child with a
24 disability, being an Assemblymember who gets

1 a lot of calls from parents of kids with
2 disabilities, we are very concerned that the
3 tax cap, in the light of the Foundation Aid
4 formula restrictions, has become an attack on
5 kids with disabilities. Because what we see
6 is that the first programs that are going to
7 be cut are the most expensive programs, and
8 that's the programs that take care of kids
9 with disabilities. Every one of the issues
10 you discussed is magnified when you're
11 dealing with a child with a disability,
12 whether it's testing, whether it's program
13 resources available, everything.

14 And I notice in here the Governor is
15 trying to give the school districts a way out
16 by basically allowing them to waive the
17 requirements that have been imposed, the
18 minimum requirements for what must be given
19 to a child with a disability. And we all
20 know that the mandates become the minimum,
21 not the maximum.

22 MR. PALLOTTA: In our testimony today
23 we're saying, we're urging the Legislature to
24 have parity between the Special Act schools,

1 the 4201 schools. I visited a school in your
2 district, Assemblyman, the School for the
3 Deaf, and what we're saying is we would love
4 to have parity with surrounding school
5 districts and funding.

6 Also on the tax cap, it's been
7 something that we've been fearing for years,
8 that there would be such a low CPI and that
9 we would see a 0.02 tax increase for
10 localities. It just -- if the state does not
11 fund the schools the way they need to,
12 they're making it impossible for a locality
13 to raise the funds that's necessary.

14 And I've often spoken to folks from
15 Massachusetts, where they do have a tax cap
16 but the state infuses tremendous amounts of
17 money into those schools to make up for what
18 the locality cannot raise.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: I just want to
20 reemphasize that. Because when you're
21 talking about such a small tax increase
22 that's permissible, in some school districts
23 where I am, the state actually contributes
24 \$1500 to the cost of education, \$1500 per

1 child, \$1800 per child. There's one school
2 district in Westchester where it's \$950 per
3 child. I'm not going to begrudge those
4 around the state who get \$8,000 and
5 \$10,000 -- they need the money. But to say
6 that the school district now has to follow
7 the requirements that the state imposes on
8 all kinds of things like audits and things
9 that really don't go to the education of the
10 children, yet they can't hire another teacher
11 to deal with some kids who have special needs
12 because they don't have the money, I think is
13 absurd.

14 You think about the -- if a school
15 district could increase its tax base by
16 \$50,000, one child with a disability moves
17 into that district, it costs them \$60,000 to
18 educate that child, so they've got to cut
19 something else.

20 So I appreciate your support for it,
21 and I think it's important that we emphasize
22 that.

23 MR. PALLOTTA: Thank you, Assemblyman.

24 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you.

1 Senator?

2 SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you. I'm
3 sorry, we skipped two Senators.

4 Senator Diane Savino.

5 SENATOR SAVINO: Thank you, Senator
6 Krueger.

7 Welcome, gentlemen and ladies.

8 I want to touch on something that came
9 up earlier today that Senator DeFrancisco
10 raised with the state chair. As you know, I
11 think it's like once a week one of the
12 tabloids loves to have a front-page story,
13 usually on a Sunday, about teachers and the
14 rubber room, a term I find particularly
15 offensive. But a couple of years ago I know
16 the UFT in your contract negotiations, you
17 negotiated a change to the teacher
18 disciplinary process, and my understanding is
19 it's actually improved considerably and sped
20 up considerably.

21 MR. MULGREW: Yup.

22 SENATOR SAVINO: So can you clarify
23 the tabloid journalism that claims that there
24 is no expeditious handling of teacher

1 disciplinary cases?

2 MR. MULGREW: I don't know if I can
3 ever clarify some of the tabloids in our
4 wonderful state. As the subject of a lot of
5 those stories, I find them quite fascinating
6 at times.

7 We're very proud of the work we did in
8 terms of speeding up the process. And the
9 numbers are there; they'll talk for
10 themselves. You saw that story was never
11 picked up by anyone else because anyone who
12 actually checked it just said, oh, it's not
13 true.

14 And we are very happy, the mayor,
15 Mayor de Blasio himself has said the process
16 is working absolutely fine. We made changes,
17 we thought it would -- fast and fair is the
18 way to go. You don't want anything drawn
19 out. We understand we work with children, we
20 have to have a greater degree of pause. We
21 get that. But fast and fair. It's not fair
22 to the school, it's not fair to educator.
23 And we're very proud of the work that we have
24 done. The tabloids, I leave that for you

1 guys to try to fix.

2 (Laughter.)

3 SENATOR SAVINO: Thank you. Just for
4 full disclosure, President Mulgrew is
5 actually one of my constituents, so I have to
6 be nicer to him than the rest of you.

7 (Laughter.)

8 SENATOR SAVINO: But I want to touch
9 on two things that are in your testimony,
10 both NYSUT's and the UFT's.

11 I had the opportunity about a month
12 ago to attend a conference where they
13 described this new program that you guys have
14 started in the City of New York, the Positive
15 Learning Collaborative. Which is really --
16 if anybody hasn't seen it, you should really
17 go and take a look at it. It's really a
18 wonderful way of dealing with some of the
19 most difficult schools, bringing down
20 violence, improving outcomes. We're
21 providing real resources.

22 So I know you're asking for an
23 additional \$1.5 million to expand it to
24 another up to 20 schools.

1 MR. MULGREW: Correct.

2 SENATOR SAVINO: Is that also -- is
3 that outside the City of New York, both -- or
4 just New York City?

5 MR. MULGREW: We would be happy to
6 help train a school outside of the city if
7 they want to do that. This is a union
8 initiative that we took on, just like the,
9 you know, rebooting community learning
10 schools five years ago. We got sick and
11 tired about hearing these debates about
12 incidents, suspensions, this -- and we're
13 like, well, we're the ones who keep telling
14 everyone it's about culture, so we'd better
15 put something together.

16 We took our union money, we sent some
17 people to Cornell for training, we asked if
18 any schools were interested. We funded it at
19 this point. We're funding all of it at this
20 point. Their teachers are then trained,
21 there's a team at the school. And it took a
22 good eight months before we started seeing
23 results, and now those schools we've had for
24 two years, and you try to take away their

1 behavior learning community team, and they'll
2 go nuts, they'll leave the building. They
3 were in schools that -- and we dealt with
4 administrations who were like, if we report
5 every single thing, they're going to tell us
6 we're a bad school. Do you understand that
7 no matter what we do, we can't win? We're
8 like, yeah, we can win. We've just got to
9 take a different approach.

10 And, you know, we understand the
11 reporting requirements and all the rest of
12 it. But it's a fantastic program. If anyone
13 wants to come to see it, we would be more
14 than happy to arrange the visit. It's
15 phenomenal. And we would absolutely be
16 willing to, if there's a school or a district
17 that's interested, to bring them to New York
18 City to take a look at what we're doing and
19 try to help them do it also.

20 SENATOR SAVINO: How do you decide
21 which schools would be, you know, a good fit
22 for the PLC?

23 MR. MULGREW: It's up to the school.
24 If a school community says this is something

1 we want to engage in, that this is -- we have
2 students who are really just coming to
3 school, they don't understand, we inherited a
4 school that -- it's usually a lot of folks
5 who just all of a sudden just say, all right,
6 this is not the way we want our school to
7 run. And the majority of students want to go
8 to a safe place every day. They want to go
9 to a safe and orderly environment.

10 And as the chancellor said, it's a
11 small segment. And you can buy -- you know,
12 you never know who your student cohorts are
13 going to be, and you can have students who
14 have all sorts of challenges, and all you
15 need is some intervention for that. It could
16 be that simple that it's a small number. But
17 this program isn't just about that, it's
18 about creating a culture of respect for
19 everyone.

20 So it's self-selected by the school,
21 but you need leadership and you also need a
22 group of teachers. But right now what we
23 have is a waiting list, because this is all
24 being funded by union dues. We have a

1 waiting list of over 20 schools in New York
2 City who want to get in right now, and we
3 stopped adding people onto the waiting list
4 because that's -- we figured we'd come up
5 here and ask you guys.

6 SENATOR SAVINO: Hopefully it will be
7 something we address in the budget.

8 Finally, in both of your testimonies
9 you refer to the concerns you have about the
10 home-based childcare system. If you
11 remember, it was five years ago, I think, six
12 years ago, I sponsored the legislation to
13 allow for home-based childcare providers the
14 opportunity to organize so that they could
15 essentially band together for the purposes of
16 improving and increasing the subsidies for
17 subsidized childcare.

18 And I know that it's -- it was
19 difficult, but I'm not sure, has there been
20 any improvement in the subsidized childcare
21 industry? Are we seeing an increase in the
22 vouchers? Have they been able to utilize
23 this organizing effort to improve their
24 circumstances?

1 MR. MULGREW: Well, we have federal
2 intervention that's problematic at this
3 point, because right now there are a whole
4 set of new requirements on top of home-based
5 childcare providers that is in terms of
6 safety inspections, also different protocols,
7 they need sign-off from different agencies.

8 Now, you have to understand that the
9 majority of home-based daycare providers have
10 two to three children. And it's a vital
11 service in a lot of our communities. So the
12 vouchers, the number of vouchers is actually
13 going down as more unfunded mandates,
14 basically, are put upon them.

15 And what we hear is, well, everyone
16 likes pre-K. We're like, yeah, but we've got
17 to get the child to 4 years of age first.
18 And it's not just the child, it's the family
19 that has to go to work that cannot afford to
20 send their child to a lot of the different
21 centers that we have that do childcare. So
22 the daycare provider is essential in so many
23 of our communities, yet slowly you see that
24 this is moving in the wrong direction.

1 So we need -- we are asking for
2 funding in our testimony, there's a funding
3 ask in there. But it's really about trying
4 to help not just here at the state level, but
5 also we need to go have a conversation with
6 the federal government: What are you doing?
7 What are you doing? Who decided that you
8 need six different agencies to sign off on
9 someone who's watching three kids a day? I
10 mean, talk about ridiculous bureaucracy.

11 And then they'll say, oh, we're here
12 for the welfare -- well, there's a way to
13 license a daycare provider and there are ways
14 to put that in a process so it's workable for
15 all those involved. But in the end, all we
16 know right now are there are things that
17 we're looking for funding to keep and just
18 increase the number of people who need the
19 slots, but at the same time we're going to
20 need intervention at the federal level to
21 say -- because right now I have to go to you
22 guys, I need \$90 million, and you're not
23 increasing a slot. That's just to do the
24 work that the federal government is just now

1 asking daycare providers to do so they can do
2 the work. Which is a little absurd.

3 SENATOR SAVINO: Certainly I look
4 forward to working with you guys on that.

5 We are also looking at center-based
6 daycare and some of the concerns and problems
7 there with the licensing requirements. You
8 know, the state handles it one way and the
9 city handles it another way, and it's a very
10 complicated industry. So hopefully
11 post-budget we can sit down and try and
12 figure out how we can make it easier for our
13 home-based childcare system, because as you
14 pointed out, it's critically important to
15 many working families.

16 Thank you.

17 MR. MULGREW: Thank you very much,
18 Senator.

19 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Senate, to close.

20 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you very
21 much.

22 Our next speaker is Senator Velmanette
23 Montgomery.

24 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Yes. Well, I'll

1 be very quick. I thank my colleague for
2 asking those questions about the childcare
3 program, appreciate it. And I have similar
4 questions, of course, and look forward to
5 working with you and her on this issue.

6 But for myself, I just want to say
7 very, very briefly and sincerely how much I
8 appreciate your working with the community,
9 the electeds, Principal Wiltshire and the
10 Boys & Girls High School family, if you will,
11 to make that school really happen, to keep it
12 from going under, to keep it from becoming a
13 massive charter school and all the other
14 things that could have happened.

15 So this is the best example of
16 collaboration, and I want to just publicly
17 acknowledge your participation and thank you.

18 MR. MULGREW: We acknowledge your
19 participation also.

20 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Absolutely.

21 MR. MULGREW: Thank you.

22 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: You know, it's --
23 we have to save that school.

24 And I also am happy that both of you

1 had in your testimony a specific reference to
2 your support of the CTE, expanding it,
3 improving and making whatever necessary
4 changes that are required in order to make
5 that a substantial part of our system, as
6 well as the Early College programs, both of
7 you have. And I think the reason I keep
8 talking about those is because I see that
9 they really do work for young people. They
10 are very successful. I would like to see
11 that become the new paradigm. You know, a
12 lot of people talk about the pipeline, but
13 they never really do anything about it, they
14 just talk about it. So this is really one of
15 those kinds of tangible programs that have an
16 outcome that we can recognize, they've been
17 in existence long enough, and we just need to
18 make them a part of what we do and how we do
19 education for young people.

20 And I am also promoting, and I believe
21 all of the education leaders are supporting
22 as well, let's extend that pipeline to the
23 middle school so that we now begin to really
24 build institutionally a new paradigm about

1 what happens to youngsters in school. And
2 middle school, we have to do middle school.
3 We can't just wait for high school to start
4 talking about college.

5 So thank you for your support, and I
6 look forward to us working together on all of
7 these issues, including the babies and the
8 toddlers and everybody.

9 MR. MULGREW: Thank you very much.

10 MR. PALLOTTA: Thank you, Senator.

11 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: That concludes
12 everything, so thank you for your patience,
13 thank you for your contributions, thank you
14 for your service. Look forward to seeing you
15 in the future very shortly, I'm sure. Thank
16 you.

17 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you very
18 much.

19 Conference of Big Five School
20 Districts, Georgia Ascitutto, executive
21 director; Sharon Contreras, superintendent of
22 Syracuse School District; Edwin Quezada,
23 interim superintendent -- I hope you're all
24 teachers, you can tell me how to speak --

1 Yonkers Public Schools; Linda Cimusz, interim
2 superintendent, Rochester School District;
3 and Dr. Kriner Cash, superintendent, Buffalo
4 School District. I know the last one, Cash.
5 I've seen it on occasion.

6 MS. ASCIUTTO: Hi, good afternoon,
7 distinguished members of the panel. I am
8 Georgia Ascitutto. I'm the executive director
9 of the Conference of Big 5 School Districts.
10 I am here today with my colleagues from the
11 Big 4 city districts, as well as a
12 representative from Utica School District in
13 the audience. I'm going to introduce them.

14 You have my written remarks, and in
15 the interest of time, if the chairs allow, I
16 am not going to speak to those. I am going
17 to let the superintendents speak, and then I
18 will fill in if there are any issues that
19 haven't been raised.

20 So to my right is Dr. Sharon
21 Contreras, superintendent of the Syracuse
22 City School District. To her right is
23 Dr. Kriner Cash, Buffalo Schools
24 superintendent. At the end of the table is

1 Dr. Edwin Quezada; he's the interim
2 superintendent of the Yonkers School
3 District. And to my left is Ms. Linda
4 Cimusz; she's our interim superintendent in
5 the Rochester schools.

6 And I'm going to ask Dr. Contreras to
7 begin.

8 DR. CONTRERAS: Thank you. Good
9 afternoon. I would like to thank the State
10 Assembly and State Senate for the opportunity
11 to testify today. We appreciate the support
12 that the State Assembly and the State Senate
13 have provided to public education.

14 According to the most recent United
15 States Census data, half of the children in
16 Syracuse live in poverty, and the city
17 continues to be among the poorest in the
18 nation. Syracuse is now poorer than all of
19 the other major upstate cities. Most
20 alarming is that a recent analysis of census
21 data shows that Syracuse has the highest rate
22 of extreme poverty, concentrated among blacks
23 and Hispanics, out of the nation's 100
24 largest metropolitan areas. Our combined

1 property and income wealth is one-third that
2 of the average New York State school
3 district.

4 The Syracuse School District is
5 implementing key strategic initiatives to
6 improve the academic outcomes of our
7 students, and we are making progress. The
8 district's four-year June graduation rate
9 increased by four percentage points in
10 2014-2015, the highest one-year increase in
11 six years, and the highest graduation rate in
12 nearly 10 years. The five-year graduation
13 rate reached 60 percent, which is also the
14 highest rate in nearly a decade. The dropout
15 rate has decreased from 26 percent to
16 16 percent.

17 While there is much work to do, the
18 Syracuse City School District is making
19 progress. In order to continue to close
20 persistent achievement gaps and fundamentally
21 change the life chances and opportunities of
22 the students that we serve, we respectfully
23 request a minimum additional state aid
24 increase of \$22.8 million beyond the

1 Executive Budget proposal to support school
2 turnaround and new school development.

3 The New York State Education
4 Department has designated 18 of Syracuse City
5 School District's schools as struggling or
6 persistently struggling. The students who
7 are most often relegated to attend these
8 schools are the poorest and most vulnerable
9 in the City of Syracuse, and New York State,
10 and indeed in our nation. Syracuse City
11 School District is prepared to infuse more
12 choices into our existing school system in
13 order to introduce more high-quality options
14 for families, and as a key strategy for
15 school turnaround. We are exploring ideas
16 such as expansion of expeditionary learning,
17 expansion of gifted education at the
18 secondary level, where students of color are
19 woefully underrepresented, development of a
20 performance arts secondary school,
21 development of year-round school models,
22 development of a Montessori School,
23 development of a personalized
24 blended-learning school modeled after

1 New York City's School of One, boys' focused
2 education to reduce the deplorable dropout
3 rates of black and Latino males, and
4 programming designed to encourage and
5 increase opportunity for girls to participate
6 in computer science education -- coding,
7 gaming, engineering and mathematics.

8 Secondly, we're looking for
9 transportation to school for students.
10 Syracuse currently buses K-12 students who
11 live outside a 1.5-mile radius from school,
12 the minimum distance aided under the current
13 state formula. Pre-K students are not
14 provided with transportation. However, many
15 of the district's students reside in
16 economically distressed areas that are
17 plagued with violence and crime. These
18 students have difficulty getting to school on
19 a daily basis, especially given the inclement
20 weather and the brutal cold for which Central
21 New York is well known.

22 We are requesting that the state
23 funding formula is changed so that any
24 pre-K-12 students who reside more than 1.0

1 mile from school is considered an allowable
2 pupil for aid purposes. This would allow us
3 to bus 1,000 pre-K students and an additional
4 2,200 K-8 students, and would generate a
5 total of \$11 million in aid for the Syracuse
6 City School District.

7 Thirdly, academic interventions and
8 support for students. Part 100 of the
9 regulations of the Commissioner of Education
10 requires that school districts provide
11 academic intervention services or additional
12 instruction. With implementation of the
13 Common Core learning standards and state
14 assessments aligned to these more rigorous
15 standards, more than 90 percent of students
16 in the Syracuse City School District qualify
17 for academic intervention services, including
18 6,228 students in Grades 4 through 8.

19 As a result of increased state aid for
20 the 2015-2016 school year, we have been able
21 to add 58 academic intervention teachers to
22 support struggling students in Grades K-5.
23 However, the sheer number of students who
24 need additional supports require new models

1 of instruction and additional staffing.

2 Fourth, the new federal Every Student
3 Succeeds Act, ESSA, includes computer science
4 with other core subjects. Computer science
5 education offers more employment
6 opportunities for students than any other
7 discipline. Unfortunately, women, blacks,
8 and Latinos are underrepresented in the
9 field. Currently, blacks and Latinos each
10 make up 2 percent of all of those employed in
11 computer sciences throughout the United
12 States. Syracuse is moving toward making
13 computer science available to all 21,000
14 students across all of our schools.

15 Implementing computer science
16 education, coupled with implementation of
17 personalized blended learning models that
18 allow teachers to tailor instruction to each
19 student's strengths, needs and interests,
20 will transform education in the Syracuse City
21 School District.

22 Fifth, the expansion of arts
23 programming. The research is overwhelming
24 that children from low socioeconomic

1 backgrounds who have access to the arts also
2 tend to have better academic results. An
3 overpreponderance on academic intervention
4 services alone, coupled with drastic budget
5 reductions over the years, has resulted in
6 many students in Syracuse being denied the
7 basic opportunity to participate in the same
8 arts programming that their more affluent
9 peers enjoy less than 5 miles away.

10 The Syracuse City School District is
11 requesting the addition of programming at the
12 elementary and middle school levels. We also
13 ask support for implementation of the newly
14 amended CR Part 154, to support English
15 language learners, and for support of Career
16 and Technical Education. Over the last three
17 years, Syracuse has invested in more than 20
18 Career and Technical Education programs,
19 addressing career readiness and projected
20 regional, state, and national growth fields.
21 The district is expanding to include three
22 new CTE pathways next year.

23 In the Syracuse City School District,
24 students enrolled in CTE programs experience

1 greater academic success and higher
2 graduation rates.

3 Thank you so much for your support of
4 public education.

5 DR. CASH: Good afternoon, colleagues,
6 honorable members of the Legislature.

7 I am new to the New York region and
8 area, specifically Buffalo, and I thought I'd
9 take a moment to just say a little bit about
10 my background, introduce myself. I have over
11 21 years of executive experience in public
12 education, 37 years total. I have been a
13 chief of accountability and systemwide
14 performance for Miami-Dade County Public
15 Schools, serving four years there, being
16 recruited there by Rudy Crew, former
17 chancellor of New York City Schools. I've
18 been a superintendent in Memphis City Schools
19 for five years and a superintendent on
20 Martha's Vineyard for 10 years. Also an
21 associate dean and faculty at Howard
22 University, and a department chairman and
23 professor at the Massachusetts College of
24 Liberal Arts. I'm educated undergrad at

1 Princeton, Stanford University, graduate, and
2 University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

3 I say this because I'm excited to come
4 to Buffalo and help begin to continue the
5 transformation of that district, in line with
6 the exciting economic renaissance that is
7 already occurring there.

8 I want to thank Georgia Ascitutto for
9 ushering me around yesterday and getting to
10 meet many of you, and I thank you certainly
11 for all of the tremendous legacy that these
12 committees have in supporting our school
13 district.

14 I'll get right to it. You know the
15 history of Buffalo, so I won't cite where
16 we've been. We're more interested at this
17 time in where we're going. And I've spent
18 quite a bit of time in these last five months
19 talking extensively with district leaders,
20 teachers, principals, students, parents,
21 business leaders, faith-based community
22 leaders, higher education community, and all
23 of our stakeholders. And what has been clear
24 is that there are six priorities that have

1 emerged from those conversations. We're
2 calling it the New Educational Bargain for
3 Students and Parents in Buffalo.

4 And the New Educational Bargain is
5 simple. The district will guarantee pathways
6 to opportunity that will lead to achievement
7 and success, in exchange for hard work,
8 commitment, and collaboration of our students
9 and parents.

10 The essential elements of the New
11 Educational Bargain are these:

12 Institute rigorous early elementary
13 education, pre-K through Grade 3, which shall
14 include but not be limited to reduced reading
15 and math class sizes in Grades 1, 2, and 3,
16 and the selection of highly qualified, highly
17 talented reading and math instructors for
18 this effort.

19 Establish strong community schools in
20 each quadrant of the City of Buffalo, to
21 serve students and families within their
22 neighborhoods. Each community school will
23 provide an enriched education experience,
24 including extended day and full wraparound

1 services.

2 Redesign and launch new innovative
3 high schools in our underperforming high
4 schools to bridge the quality -- and the
5 equality gap -- between traditional and
6 criterion schools, and provide for expanded
7 opportunities for career development aligned
8 to emerging industries in Western New York.
9 Over 165,000 new jobs will be coming to that
10 region; we want our young people to be
11 qualified to take those jobs.

12 Commit to a plan for extended learning
13 excellence for all our students, which
14 includes revamp after-school, summer school,
15 Saturday school, alternative education,
16 digital learning, and technology-based
17 learning, especially including the arts and
18 athletics, as you've heard throughout the
19 testimonies today.

20 Five, provide services for our
21 neediest children and families, which shall
22 include a revamping of educational
23 opportunities for students on the east side
24 of Buffalo. Buffalo is extraordinary in the

1 way in which it's providing mental health,
2 legal and other health services for all of
3 our students and families.

4 And perhaps most important, create a
5 new relationship with our teachers, which
6 recognizes them as professionals, pays them
7 fairly and competitively, provides the
8 support and professional development they
9 need to enable them to do their best work,
10 and reform the working understanding between
11 the district and the Buffalo Teachers
12 Federation. We want, together, to ensure the
13 best instruction for all our children, every
14 day, in every school, in every classroom, in
15 every subject, for every year of school.

16 So in short, the priorities that we're
17 asking your support on are these:

18 Increase Foundation Aid to the
19 district to fund its educational priorities
20 for the New Educational Bargain that I've
21 just described, for an estimated cost of
22 \$40 million over the next three years.
23 Because these goals won't be achieved in one
24 year alone, they'll be phased in over three

1 years;

2 Expand and consolidate the universal
3 pre-K programs as described by the
4 commissioner, Commissioner Elia, earlier this
5 morning;

6 Provide a permanent increase in the
7 health services aid line for Buffalo of at
8 least \$2 million more, to \$7.3 million. As
9 you know, with the exception of the one-time
10 bullet aid allocated in 2015-2016, there have
11 been no increases since 2006-2007, despite
12 significant increased costs of services,
13 service needs, and requests from charter
14 schools to provide much-needed nursing
15 services;

16 Increase funding for the receivership
17 schools or the struggling schools -- again,
18 as the commissioners and others have asked
19 for, specifically adding funding for schools
20 that are classified as struggling, so that we
21 can make more investment in their leadership
22 talent in those schools, teacher professional
23 development -- a lot of that is needed
24 there -- chronic absenteeism, and enriched

1 after-school programs.

2 And then, to help support the infusion
3 of digital technology into our schools, which
4 align with all six of these priorities herein
5 described, I'm asking that you consider
6 funding from the New York Broadband Program.
7 We already have the Smart Schools Bond money,
8 but the broadband program would help us for
9 projects that are now in rural areas of the
10 state where no broadband exists, so the
11 services are inadequate. We understand that,
12 and we support that.

13 But a critical component for our
14 success with the New Educational Bargain is
15 to be able to access this available funding
16 so that we can serve our poorer communities
17 in Buffalo. It's not that they don't have
18 connectivity possibility, but they often --
19 the families can't afford that connectivity.
20 And so we want to help that and get that done
21 in all of our communities in the city, but we
22 need to have access to that broadband
23 program.

24 And finally, I just wanted to add my

1 support for what you have heard often today.
2 I served on the Regents task force led by
3 Regent Lester Young, and I support the
4 recommendation over two years of about \$25
5 million to help improve outcomes for our
6 young men and boys of color. It's very
7 important that we continue to provide
8 on-ramps for success for all of our children,
9 all of our girls and boys, certainly, but we
10 see profound continuing problems with that
11 population of our young people.

12 So thank you for listening. We think
13 our request in Buffalo is aligned to our
14 colleagues' here in the Big 5, aligned with
15 the commissioner's request for the whole
16 state, and we want to be a good team player
17 in all of this. And we thank you for
18 listening and for your continued support.

19 DR. QUEZADA: Distinguished members of
20 the joint legislative fiscal and education
21 committees, thank you for the opportunity to
22 address you on behalf of the Yonkers City
23 School District. I am Dr. Edwin Quezada,
24 interim superintendent of schools, here to

1 advocate for the 27,000 students who on a
2 daily basis seek the American dream, and to
3 explain why investing in the Yonkers public
4 schools is a prudent use of state tax
5 dollars.

6 Also with me in the audience are the
7 finance commissioner for the City of Yonkers,
8 Mr. John Liszewski, and the budget director,
9 Mr. Andrew Lenney. Together we are a dynamic
10 team who seeks opportunity for each and every
11 one of our students.

12 I have entered my testimony into
13 evidence, and I will only give you a synopsis
14 of what I have written for you. It is our
15 joint responsibility to provide each child an
16 education that will enable them an
17 opportunity to attain their dreams and become
18 productive citizens. Yonkers Board of
19 Education trustees, the mayor and city
20 council have embraced a common goal,
21 committed to an educational agenda that
22 supports the needs of children who attend
23 school in an urban center and who continue to
24 lack a sound, basic education.

1 The Yonkers public schools are
2 experiencing significant success. Much of
3 the success was accomplished working with our
4 mayor, city and state delegations, and the
5 Governor, garnering valuable resources for
6 our children. So why invest more in Yonkers'
7 children? Because our school district
8 continually improves student outcomes.

9 Just look at the state data. On
10 January 11th, the State Education Department
11 released the 2015 graduation rates and once
12 again, Yonkers public schools' graduation
13 rate is up. The June 2015 graduation rate is
14 up 5 percent from last year, to 74 percent.
15 And for August, the gain is 2 percent, with
16 78 percent of the Class of 2015 graduating on
17 time, the highest of all the Big 5 school
18 districts.

19 Yonkers public schools made gains in
20 the 2015 English language arts and
21 mathematics assessments over the three years
22 of the new Common Core standards. And this
23 year, I'm expecting growth in each and every
24 one of our underperforming schools.

1 Our enrollment grows every year by
2 almost 300 students. This trend is predicted
3 to continue. As of yesterday, Yonkers is
4 educating 27,784 students. Four hundred
5 students with disabilities are in out-of
6 district placement, which I would love to
7 bring them all back; 618 students in a
8 charter school, and 26,766 students are in
9 our public schools. As you can see, our
10 commitment to education has not wavered.
11 Enrollment is increasing, more families are
12 staying in our city, teachers remain
13 committed to our students' education,
14 students achieve at high levels and graduate
15 on time.

16 Community schools and partnerships
17 flourish in every school. We work with local
18 health, medical and post-secondary
19 institutions to provide comprehensive
20 academic, social and health services for
21 students and family members that will result
22 in improved educational outcomes for our
23 children.

24 And the successful implementation of

1 the 2014 intermunicipal agreement between the
2 City of Yonkers and the Board of Education is
3 a model approach to shared services in
4 municipalities facing financial challenges.

5 Now that I have captured your
6 attention with Yonkers' successes, let me
7 share our challenges. Yonkers' children are
8 educated in crumbling infrastructure. The
9 average age of our school buildings is over
10 75 years. These schools are at or over their
11 capacity and cannot accommodate current
12 technology or required additional
13 instructional space for our growing
14 enrollment and increasing need for
15 in-district space for students with
16 disabilities and English language learners.

17 Out of necessity, due to limited
18 funding and staff, our annual capital
19 improvement plan is actually done as triage,
20 prioritizing projects based on health and
21 safety and building integrity needs.

22 Yonkers is further constrained by the
23 70 percent state reimbursement on approved
24 construction projects. This can be remedied

1 by the city's proposed legislation for the
2 reconstruction of Yonkers schools. The
3 Yonkers community supports this legislation
4 and will vigorously lobby for its adoption.

5 The challenges facing the Yonkers City
6 School District in 2016 and beyond is to meet
7 its lawful responsibility to provide
8 educationally sound instructional programs
9 that address the needs of Yonkers students
10 and the community. Too many years have gone
11 by, and too many Yonkers students have not
12 had the benefit of an appropriate public
13 education. The majority of our schools do
14 not have a guidance counselor, a school
15 psychologist, or a social worker.

16 Let me share our student-teacher
17 ratios. Guidance counselors, 787 students to
18 1. Psychologists, 1,150 students to 1.
19 Social workers, 2,231 students to 1. As you
20 can see, these are not services that we're
21 really providing. Again, we're only
22 addressing small issues with that limited
23 support that we have in our schools.

24 Our elementary schools are void of

1 extracurricular activities or sports. Music
2 and art are limited to a day or less a week.
3 And our student-teacher ratio for library
4 media specialists is 3,347 students to 1.

5 But Yonkers is determined to turn
6 these challenges into real opportunities for
7 its students. I ask that you recognize our
8 challenges, celebrate our successes, and
9 commit to expanding opportunities for
10 Yonkers' children. Help us move towards
11 compliance and provide opportunities for our
12 students. Please consider increasing the
13 Foundation Aid formula to recognize growing
14 enrollment both at BEDS day and throughout
15 the year, thereby providing Yonkers essential
16 recurring revenues to support our increasing
17 number of students with disabilities and
18 English language learners.

19 Please understand that the Executive
20 Budget leaves my school district with a
21 \$7 million gap for a status quo budget.
22 Based on what you heard, a status quo budget
23 is not what we need in Yonkers.

24 Restoring the total amount of our Gap

1 Elimination Adjustment this year, providing
2 full funding and reimbursement for our Career
3 and Technical Education programs, which has
4 remained stagnant for years and does not
5 recognize program sequencing that begins in
6 9th grade.

7 I thank the committee for all the
8 energy that you have around Career and
9 Technical Education, and I invite you to come
10 to Saunders trades and technical high school
11 in Yonkers, the oldest trades and technical
12 high school and the best trades and technical
13 high school in the state. So please come and
14 see us.

15 Recognizing that pupil support
16 services, art, music and sports are not
17 extras, these are essential components of a
18 sound, basic education.

19 Increasing funding for community
20 schools statewide to enable districts to
21 properly implement mandated instructional
22 improvements. The Executive put in \$100
23 million for community schools; Yonkers will
24 get about \$4.4 million. Community schools

1 will require a lot more funding, as my
2 colleagues have indicated already.

3 Providing adequate funding to support
4 professional development aligned to state
5 mandates. We are in the middle of changes
6 again. These changes will not become a
7 reality unless the proper professional
8 development is provided for administrators
9 and teachers. They are responsible for
10 educating our students; let's provide them
11 with the tools essential for making that
12 happen.

13 Finally, I encourage each of you to
14 visit Yonkers and see firsthand the appalling
15 conditions of so many of our schools. I am
16 confident that your visit will convince you
17 to support the city school reconstruction
18 legislation and, as you have with other
19 cities across the state, become an active
20 participant, creating jobs and quality
21 schools to improve the entire Yonkers
22 community.

23 The Yonkers Board of Education
24 trustees, the mayor and city council,

1 parents, students, teachers, administrators,
2 civil service employees and I are committed
3 to the education of all of our children.

4 I leave you with one last number. For
5 us to begin to move towards compliance, we
6 have a budget deficit gap of about
7 \$24 million. Let us not allow that to
8 continue in Yonkers any more. Our children
9 are succeeding. Our city is doing what's
10 right for our children. Our teachers and
11 administrators are taking care of our
12 youngsters, and providing a good education.
13 Let us provide them with the funding needed
14 for making this happen.

15 I ask you to also commit to our
16 diverse, growing, and vibrant community. It
17 is Yonkers' time; give our children what they
18 deserve.

19 Thank you.

20 MS. CIMUSZ: Good afternoon, honorable
21 members. Let me introduce myself very
22 quickly. I see my colleagues have left me
23 two minutes, so I will try to keep my remarks
24 to that.

1 My name is Linda Cimusz. I have been
2 in Rochester as the interim superintendent
3 for seven days now, so -- however, I am not a
4 stranger to the Big 5. I spent 22 years in
5 Syracuse, I did my teaching there, was a
6 principal -- elementary, middle and high
7 school -- there. Just last year I worked in
8 an interim manner in Buffalo. And then I
9 spent 16 years in the Williamsville School
10 District as assistant superintendent. So
11 although I'm brand-new to Rochester, I am not
12 new to the Big 5 and urban education.

13 My earliest estimate is that the
14 Rochester schools are taking many of the
15 right steps toward improving outcomes for
16 students. Ninety-five percent of Rochester
17 4-year-olds are enrolled in our universal
18 pre-K program, nearly all of whom attend
19 full-day classes. On January 4th, we began
20 serving 650 3-year-olds, thanks to the pre-K
21 expansion grant. With help from Governor
22 Cuomo's new initiative on pre-K at age 3, we
23 hope soon to offer full-day programs to every
24 3- and 4-year-old in Rochester.

1 Once again, we continue to work on
2 attendance improvement. The focus of the
3 school district for this past year has been
4 reducing the number of chronically absent
5 students in elementary schools. And last
6 year, 1100 students improved their attendance
7 as a result of this initiative.

8 Rochester's graduation rates, although
9 still way too low, are also improving. The
10 five-year rate of 58 percent in 2015 was the
11 highest in six years, and performance by
12 students with disabilities has increased
13 steadily over the past four years.

14 From a financial perspective,
15 Rochester has reduced its structural budget
16 gap by more than 25 percent over the past
17 four years. While doing so, the district has
18 invested more in students while improving
19 financial stability. We intend to continue
20 on that path into the 2016-2017 budget.

21 However, we do project a budget
22 challenge of nearly \$42 million next year.
23 There are specific areas in which we would
24 like to request more help, and without being

1 repetitive, I will echo many of the
2 sentiments of my colleagues. And you have
3 more detailed remarks in the written
4 testimony, but I would like to highlight
5 three areas that I'd like to particularly
6 mention now.

7 One is the receivership schools. All
8 14 of Rochester's receivership schools have
9 improvement plans in place, compliance
10 deadlines have been met. Our four
11 persistently struggling schools have used
12 receivership aid to fund the staffing support
13 they need to meet improvement targets.

14 However, Rochester's 10 struggling
15 schools, the ones with two years to meet the
16 improvement targets, have similar needs, and
17 therefore we respectfully request
18 receivership aid for those struggling schools
19 for 2016-2017, perhaps using the formula that
20 supported our persistently struggling
21 schools' budget this current year.

22 Our second request is for a pilot
23 project to provide universal transportation
24 for our elementary and K-8 students for next

1 year. Fewer than 20 percent of these
2 students currently attend their neighborhood
3 school, and we believe the transportation is
4 the major reason why, according to parents
5 who have told us so.

6 We intend to request a grant to fund
7 transportation for Rochester schools to their
8 neighborhood schools. This will support the
9 Safe Neighborhoods objective of the
10 Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative. We
11 also believe it will reduce transportation
12 costs in the long run through more efficient
13 routing.

14 Finally, we ask for \$2 million to
15 maintain school nursing services. Our nurses
16 play an exceptionally valuable role in
17 helping our Rochester students stay healthy,
18 and the demand for their services, as you are
19 well aware, is increasing.

20 We deeply appreciate your past support
21 to this initiative and hope the Legislature
22 will continue to help us maintain nursing
23 services at the current level.

24 With that, once again, and knowing

1 that I could repeat the remarks of my
2 colleagues, I will not. But I thank you for
3 your time and your consideration of our
4 requests.

5 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NOLAN: Let me thank you
6 for coming. I apologize, I had to run out
7 for a minute. I look forward to getting to
8 know each and every one of you a little
9 better. We've obviously had some turnover in
10 these spots, and you have very challenging
11 assignments. And we want our committee to be
12 there for you. I know you meet primarily
13 with your delegations, but, you know, we hope
14 that we can make the time to do that.

15 I particularly want to extend my best
16 regards to Dan Lowengaard, who of course
17 served in Syracuse for so many years. And I
18 really feel very terribly that he would be
19 taken ill. And it just is -- take good care
20 of yourselves, because you're in very
21 high-pressured positions.

22 So we look forward to that. I
23 certainly have told Shelley and Gary Pretlow
24 I want to see that school in Yonkers, because

1 it's easy for me to get to from Queens, and I
2 just -- we keep saying we're going to do it,
3 and just somehow we're up here for 12-hour
4 hearings and so we don't get there. But I
5 look forward to it.

6 And of course I get to Syracuse all
7 the time to see my mom, so I hope that I'll
8 be up there to see the superintendent again
9 soon.

10 Thank you very much. Thanks.

11 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: And thank you. I'd
12 like to echo what the Assemblywoman said. On
13 behalf of the Senate, we welcome you to
14 Albany. Sorry for the delay. We appreciate
15 all the great things that you do for the
16 children in your districts.

17 You've had seven successful days now
18 as a new superintendent, and I'm sure there
19 will be many more.

20 And as a fellow Western New Yorker, I
21 want to give a shout out to Dr. Cash. I'm
22 glad that you spent time in Massachusetts so
23 that you could get used to some of the colder
24 weather after coming from the South. But

1 congratulations to you too, and look forward
2 to working with all of you. Thank you.

3 SENATOR KRUEGER: Cathy Young meant to
4 say thank goodness you studied in
5 Massachusetts, a Democratic state. That's
6 what she really meant to say.

7 (Laughter.)

8 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: The time is late,
9 but it's not that late.

10 (Laughter.)

11 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Okay, so I don't
12 think we have any questions. No questions.
13 Thank you.

14 DR. CASH: Thank you.

15 DR. QUEZADA: Thank you.

16 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: I'm sorry, Senator
17 Montgomery wanted to ask a question. Sorry.

18 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: I don't have a
19 question. I just wanted to say specifically
20 to Dr. Cash we were very fortunate in that we
21 now have Dr. Crew back. And you were with a
22 masterful educator, so I trust you're doing
23 wonders for Buffalo. Sorry we don't have you
24 in Brooklyn.

1 DR. CASH: Thank you.

2 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you very
3 much.

4 MS. ASCIUTTO: Thank you.

5 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Next we will hear
6 from the Council of School Supervisors and
7 Administrators, CSA, Ernest Logan, president.

8 MR. LOGAN: Good evening, good
9 afternoon, late afternoon. I am going to --
10 I provided my testimony. I just want to
11 highlight a few things.

12 And I want to welcome Senator Young.
13 Thank you for -- congratulations on this new
14 opportunity here.

15 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you very
16 much.

17 MR. LOGAN: I'm sorry that my fellow
18 supervisor was not able to continue to join
19 us. Senator Marcellino, who's a former
20 member of CSA, was a school supervisor.

21 But I'm going to be brief. You have
22 my testimony, and there are a couple of
23 things I want a highlight for you. You've
24 heard a lot of what is going on, and we are

1 in support of what has been said.

2 On mayoral control, I just need to
3 tell you this. I think it's at a point now
4 where we start to remove this from the
5 political realm and it really doesn't matter
6 who the mayor is -- but we need to decide if
7 this is what we need to do in the way of
8 governance. And if we're not willing to
9 really extend it and make it work, then we
10 need, out of this august body here, to create
11 a task force to decide what we're going to do
12 about governance in New York City. Because I
13 don't think we can continue to hold our
14 children as a political football.

15 Continuity is key to being able to
16 make educational changes. And we saw this as
17 we came together -- the chancellor, the
18 mayor, the teachers, the UFT and CSA -- to
19 really work on what we call our renewal
20 schools. We would not be able to do that if
21 we didn't believe that there was something
22 long term to what we were planning. These
23 are not one-shot fixes.

24 The other thing that I would like to

1 point out -- you've heard some of this today
2 from the commissioners and others about
3 professional development for teachers, but
4 also for supervisors. Historically, CSA has
5 done professional development, and with the
6 help of the Legislature the last couple of
7 years, we've been able to get funding for the
8 Educational Leadership Institute where we're
9 able to provide mentoring and coaching for
10 school leaders, principals and assistant
11 principals. And this became critical for us,
12 because we were able to then not just do it
13 for brand-new people, but people who were in
14 service as things changed, to be able to get
15 them to get up on what needed to happen.

16 And yes, we believe that we need to do
17 full funding for the Campaign for Fiscal
18 Equity. We need to get away from this --
19 with this gap elimination -- we just need to
20 get past all of that.

21 Now I'm going to touch on something
22 that's very controversial, and most people
23 seem to have a problem with it, but I need to
24 tell you this. The core value of what we

1 looked at, myself and at CSA, is what's best
2 for kids. And so we represent a group of
3 unionized charter schools, and these were
4 board of ed schools where people, community
5 people, decided they wanted to try something
6 different. And so instead of it being a
7 place where we could really look at the
8 innovations they have done and been a real
9 incubator for what's happening, people have
10 thrown them into this pot -- a political
11 pot -- that's not about what's best for
12 children. And so what we've looked at is
13 that there are legacy issues that they have
14 because they are unionized, so they're having
15 a major issue in regard to how they do their
16 funding, how do they pay for their pensions,
17 how do they pay for their health costs, how
18 do they pay for the buildings that they're
19 in.

20 And so we need -- we're asking this
21 committee, if you read what we've talked
22 about here, is that we really would like you
23 to look at the legacy cost of conversion
24 charter schools. And we are proposing

1 something a little different.

2 Now, some of my colleagues say why do
3 you say anything good about charter
4 schools --

5 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NOLAN: There are six of
6 them, right? I just wondered if there are
7 six.

8 MR. LOGAN: Pardon me? There are six
9 of them, yes.

10 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NOLAN: So there are
11 only six, we're only talking about six.

12 MR. LOGAN: Only six.

13 And we're really looking at -- if we
14 were to do the legacy course for these
15 schools, we pull out the rest of this and
16 just see to it that they're able to continue
17 to exist, because they're doing good work in
18 the community.

19 And my final piece that I'd like to
20 talk about is that we have been very
21 supportive of community schools, but I want
22 everyone to understand here that community
23 schools is not a school improvement model.
24 It's a supplement to what needs to happen in

1 these schools. And I don't want people to
2 think that because we bring in CEOs and bring
3 in health centers and improve this thing
4 about attendance, that that's going to turn
5 the academics around in these schools. The
6 only way these schools improve is when you
7 get quality school leaders and quality
8 teachers.

9 And we were in New York City, because
10 we wanted to make this right. There's some
11 things to allow this chancellor to get the
12 leadership she needed in these schools to be
13 able to have the right people at the helm.
14 And the issues that we've had all along is
15 that principals should have the discretion to
16 do what's best at their building, because
17 that's the person you hire to do that work.

18 And so if there are any questions,
19 I'll take them. But I knew it was a long
20 day.

21 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: It is still a long
22 day.

23 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NOLAN: I just always
24 want to thank you. I stay no matter how late

1 so I can hear -- you're earnest -- even
2 though I have to, at some point, to get that
3 train back. With the snow, I wasn't able to
4 drive this week and stay as late as I can.
5 But I really appreciate the wisdom we always
6 get from you personally and from the people
7 you represent and your team up here, which we
8 work so closely with, all the men and women
9 who represent you up here, and we appreciate
10 it very much.

11 MR. LOGAN: Thank you. Thank you so
12 much.

13 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Senator Krueger.

14 SENATOR KRUEGER: Hi. And also thank
15 you. I just -- when I go on record and I --
16 while the UFT and NYSUT may have left, I
17 don't think they disagree. We know from our
18 communities when you have great principals in
19 your schools, they make them great schools.
20 And they work with their teachers and the
21 families to make sure that happens.

22 So people like to joke about setting
23 you off against each other, on the dark side
24 or the light side, but again, I don't think

1 there's one legislator who doesn't recognize
2 you get the right principals in those schools
3 and you back them up and you will be happy
4 with the outcomes.

5 So thank you.

6 MR. LOGAN: I appreciate that. That
7 absolutely is true, and we've shown that does
8 happen.

9 Thank you so much.

10 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you so much.
11 And you have great energy considering the
12 length of the day, so thank you for that too.

13 MR. LOGAN: Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you, yes.

15 School Administrators Association of
16 New York State, SAANYS. Jim Viola, director
17 of government relations.

18 Yes, good afternoon.

19 MR. VIOLA: Good afternoon,
20 Chairpersons Farrell, Young, and Nolan, and
21 honorable members of the New York State
22 Legislature. My name is Jim Viola. I am the
23 director of government relations for the
24 School Administrators Association of New York

1 State, and we're grateful for this
2 opportunity to present testimony in regard to
3 the Governor's proposed Executive Budget.

4 I'm not going to go into great detail
5 on the budgetary aspects of our paper. You
6 all have that before you, and you'll find
7 that many of our recommendations are on the
8 same page as these from the State Education
9 Department and from NYSUT. To wit, we
10 recommend an increase in state aid to schools
11 of at least \$2.2 billion; that we completely
12 do away with the GEA and make meaningful
13 progress in terms of foundation aid; that we
14 address an anomalously low property tax cap
15 for this year, which is the equivalent of
16 losing \$308 million from school districts
17 outside of the Big 5. And to make sure that
18 every school district in New York State gets
19 a fair and realistic additional allocation of
20 state aid, recognizing that under the current
21 budget proposed by the Governor, some school
22 districts will sustain a cut in state aid for
23 next year.

24 The balance of my presentation is

1 going to be focused on programmatic types of
2 issues, starting with annual professional
3 performance reviews.

4 First of all, we appreciate the
5 efforts and actions taken by the Governor's
6 Common Core Task Force and the
7 recommendations that accrued from the task
8 force. We also appreciate the timely action
9 on the part of the Board of Regents in
10 putting regulations in place to implement
11 Recommendation 21.

12 But when the former leadership of the
13 State Education Department was putting their
14 education reform agenda in place, they many
15 times described it as building an airplane
16 while flying it. In some ways -- you know
17 what, what we're still doing is exactly that.
18 The actions of the Common Core Task Force,
19 the regulatory changes, are an imperfect
20 patch, not a fix, of our APPR system.

21 We're glad to hear that the new
22 commissioner and her leadership team is
23 already pursuing improvements in the Common
24 Core-aligned tests for Grades 3 to 8. That's

1 great. We're hopeful that they're also
2 considering alternative ways to do the
3 state-developed growth score. There are
4 other aspects, though, of 3012-d and
5 regulations that need to be reviewed and
6 probably adjusted. Things such as the
7 matrix, looking at student performance, and
8 observation. Are these the right factors to
9 keep in place, knowing the additional
10 flexibility that we now have under ESSA? Is
11 a fifty-fifty weighting of those things the
12 right weighting of those things? Because all
13 of that remains in place still today.

14 In terms of the independent evaluator
15 requirements, is the additional
16 administrative burden, the additional costs,
17 and the information that accrues from those
18 observations -- is the juice worth the
19 squeeze?

20 And so what we're saying is this: We
21 encourage the Governor's office, members of
22 the State Legislature and the State Education
23 Department to continue engaging appropriate
24 entities so that together we can continue to

1 make changes that are necessary in statute
2 and regulation so that the next time we fly
3 the APPR plane, it will be in a plane that's
4 actually airworthy.

5 The next thing I'd like to discuss is
6 failing and persistently failing schools.
7 The requirements and targets set for those
8 schools -- that are basically all in 17
9 fiscally-strapped school districts -- is like
10 driving the Indy 500 in an old car that
11 doesn't have enough gas.

12 All of these 17 school districts, none
13 of them get their full allocation under
14 Foundation Aid. And they should be
15 prioritized for that purpose. They're in
16 arrears by \$2.7 billion right now.

17 The \$75 million that was set aside in
18 2015 for the persistently failing schools, it
19 was supposed to be provided to them by
20 statute by July 1st. It didn't materialize
21 until, I believe, last week -- with half the
22 school year having already elapsed. We think
23 that something should be done to extend
24 availability of those funds and also in terms

1 of the accountability.

2 For the failing schools -- not the
3 persistently failing schools, but for the 124
4 failing schools, right now they receive no
5 additional fiscal support. And so if they're
6 going to be putting some additional finances,
7 personnel, or resources into those schools,
8 it's done on a rob-Peter-to-pay-Paul basis
9 which our members are telling us is occurring
10 in some of these schools. If \$75 million is
11 appropriate for 20 persistently failing
12 schools, then we think \$75 million is
13 appropriate for 124 failing schools. So why
14 don't we do that?

15 In terms of accountability, there is
16 no silver bullet in turning around these
17 schools. There's no quick fix, and there's
18 certainly no free fix for these schools. The
19 failing schools are given two years in order
20 to post demonstrable improvement, and
21 counterintuitively, the persistently failing
22 schools that have been in that status for a
23 decade or more are given half that much time,
24 one year, to post demonstrable improvement.

1 In the public hearing that was led by
2 Assemblywoman Nolan back in October, speaker
3 after speaker, including researchers and
4 practitioners, all said one year, two years
5 is out of sync with what is really called
6 for.

7 What we're recommending is that at
8 least five years be set for these schools in
9 order to post demonstrable improvement. And
10 one other thing in terms of judging the
11 efficacy of this program -- it shouldn't be
12 done with tunnel vision, looking only at
13 failing schools, only at persistently failing
14 schools, but it should be looking at the
15 other schools within those school districts.
16 Will we really consider it to be a success if
17 a failing school achieves its targets and
18 multiple non-failing schools fall into
19 accountability status?

20 For community schools, we support the
21 \$100 million being proposed by the Governor
22 to go into the 17 school districts, with \$25
23 million to go into other high-needs,
24 low-performing schools. But we have two

1 concerns about this. Number one,
2 sustainability. What happens after one year
3 or two years? Community schools aren't "one
4 time you establish it and run it forevermore
5 for free." There are recurring costs
6 associated with these schools, and something
7 has to be put in place or they will
8 evaporate.

9 The other thing is, are community
10 schools the right remedy for every one of
11 these schools? Can't this money be somewhat
12 fungible, as the \$75 million that was put in
13 place for the last year for the persistently
14 failing schools, so that they can do other
15 things if that's appropriate for them as
16 well?

17 In terms of the pre-kindergarten
18 programs, we feel it's premature to hoist the
19 victory flag for 4-year-olds and start going
20 down the road in terms of 3-year-olds.
21 Currently, approximately 60 percent of
22 4-year-old children in New York State have
23 pre-kindergarten available to them.

24 There is an equity gap in this

1 program, and we can put a number on it: it's
2 52 percent. In the testimony that you have,
3 the last page shows that New York and New
4 York City, 82 percent of 4-year-old children
5 have access to pre-kindergarten programs, and
6 on Long Island it's 30 percent.

7 This has to be done in a fair manner
8 and in a manner, to Senator Krueger's point,
9 that doesn't disadvantage schools that are
10 already operating these programs.

11 We oppose the establishment of the
12 Empire State Pre-K Grant Board. This will
13 add to state overhead, it will add to
14 bureaucracy. It will also politicize the
15 program, and basically it will just fragment
16 the program more than it already is with the
17 six programs in operation right now.

18 We recommend that the \$22 million or
19 more proposed by Governor Cuomo be redirected
20 to 4-year-old pre-K programs. On a
21 longer-term basis, we recommend also that
22 these programs be amalgamated into a single
23 cohesive pre-K system that's universally
24 available to all students on an equal basis,

1 with funding that's built in -- not on a
2 competitive basis, not having to run it
3 through you on a year-to-year basis to get
4 additional allocations -- with a single set
5 of standards and requirements.

6 And lastly, in terms of the
7 commissioner's point around PD -- yes, we do
8 get calls at SAANYS from failing schools and
9 persistently failing schools saying they need
10 professional development, some technical
11 assistance. We get calls around where can we
12 get PD around the Common Core standards --
13 keep in mind now, based on what the
14 commissioner said, they'll be revising those
15 standards. So more PD will be necessary --
16 pedagogy PD, and also professional
17 development in line with the Common Core Task
18 Force Recommendation 9. SED does not have
19 the capacity to do this right now, and we
20 support SED's recommendation that they
21 receive additional support for this purpose.

22 Thank you very much.

23 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you very
24 much, Mr. Viola.

1 Any questions? Hearing none, thank
2 you.

3 SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you very much.

4 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: All right, folks,
5 we're now going into the five-minute rule.

6 Let's see -- the next person is
7 Jasmine Gripper, legislative director of the
8 Alliance for Quality Education.

9 I'd like it, from now on in, if we
10 could do five minutes on the clock. And
11 would you please come down closer. The next
12 person will be Bernadette Kappen -- so if you
13 come closer, you'll be able to walk faster.
14 And then after that would be Tim Kelly.

15 Ms. Gripper? Yes.

16 MS. GRIPPER: Yes. Thank you.

17 Chairman Farrell, Chairman Cathy
18 Nolan, the members of the Legislature, thank
19 you for having me here today.

20 My name is Jasmine Gripper. I am the
21 legislative director for the Alliance for
22 Quality Education. Our organization is a
23 coalition of parents, teachers, students and
24 community members from all across the state.

1 In an attempt to be brief and
2 efficient, I will not read my testimony in
3 its entirety, but I will go through some key
4 points that I would like to highlight.

5 It is unfortunate that the Governor's
6 budget --

7 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: I'm assuming the
8 clock in front of you is working, though.
9 You can see the clock?

10 MS. GRIPPER: Yes. I'm going.

11 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Okay. I just
12 wanted to be sure.

13 MS. GRIPPER: It is unfortunate that
14 the Governor's Executive Budget proposal is
15 grossly inadequate. \$961 million sounds like
16 a lot of money, but it is not enough for the
17 2.7 million students of New York State. The
18 \$266 million in Foundation Aid in his
19 proposal seems like a bad joke when
20 Foundation Aid should be our number-one
21 priority.

22 We all know that this is not enough to
23 actually improve schools or close the funding
24 gap between the poor and wealthy districts,

1 which now stands at over \$8,733 per pupil and
2 is growing.

3 This year marks the 10-year
4 anniversary of the final court decision in
5 the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit. It
6 has been 10 years since the state's highest
7 court ordered the state to adequately fund
8 our schools, and yet our schools are still
9 owed \$4.8 billion. And 72 percent of this
10 funding is owed to high-need districts.

11 This lack of adequate funding has
12 perpetuated inequality across the state. It
13 is important to note that our schools are not
14 failing, it is the state that has been
15 failing to fully fund our schools. And the
16 state has been persistently failing for over
17 10 years.

18 The Alliance for Quality Education is
19 recommending an increase of \$2.9 billion.
20 This amount is necessary to maintain services
21 and to provide vital programs from pre-K to
22 Grade 12. This funding would provide for
23 smaller class sizes, engaging curriculums,
24 curriculum materials, AP classes, electives

1 like art, music, career and technical
2 education programs, programs for English
3 language learners, restorative justice
4 practices to keep students in school instead
5 of pushing them out, and to hire more school
6 psychologists and social workers.

7 I've heard one New York City teacher
8 once comment "We have iPhone children
9 receiving a flip-phone education."

10 It is now up to you to make sure that
11 our schools have a large enough increase,
12 \$2.9 billion, that's fairly distributed to
13 comply with the Campaign for Fiscal Equity,
14 to give kids a sound, basic education, with
15 72 percent of it going to high-needs
16 districts.

17 In terms of community schools, we are
18 pleased that the Governor proposed funding
19 for community schools. But \$100 million is
20 insufficient to create college-ready
21 community schools. Last year the Governor
22 and the Legislature determined that \$75
23 million was required for the 20 schools.
24 Based on this cost, we should be providing

1 \$535 million for the 144 schools.

2 In terms of pre-K, in 2014 New York
3 State promised to provide full-day pre-K for
4 every 4-year-old. This promise was fulfilled
5 for New York City, but there are 115,000
6 4-year-olds without access to full-day pre-K
7 in every region of the state. If I were an
8 upstate or suburban legislator, I would be
9 asking "Where's my pre-K?" We support the
10 Regents' recommendation, and we urge you to
11 add \$125 million to expand high-quality,
12 full-day pre-K.

13 I want to conclude with remarks on the
14 2 percent state spending cap. The Governor
15 imposed a 2 percent spending cap on the
16 budget without any justification other than
17 his desire for the talking point of reining
18 in spending. But this cap has resulted in
19 cuts in many vital state programs. At a time
20 when New York State has record levels of
21 children in poverty and billions in a
22 recurring surplus, we urge you to disregard
23 this cap and create a budget that works for
24 all of us and, most importantly, our

1 children.

2 This is the year to make sure we get
3 back on track with the Campaign for Fiscal
4 Equity. This is the year to provide
5 \$2.9 billion in state aid, with 72 percent of
6 it going to high-needs districts. This is
7 the year we can finally stand up for our
8 kids.

9 Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you very
11 much.

12 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NOLAN: Great job.
13 Great testimony, great summary. We
14 appreciate -- we will make sure that everyone
15 knows that you also talked about the voucher
16 tax credit issue and the paid family leave
17 and DREAM Act and some of the others.

18 But thank you for condensing it. And,
19 you know, we love working with AQE, and we
20 love working with you, Jasmine.

21 MS. GRIPPER: Likewise.

22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NOLAN: Thank you very,
23 very much. Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you.

1 SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you.

2 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Bernadette Kappen,
3 chairperson, 4201 Schools Association. Tim
4 Kelly also.

5 Next will be William Wolff, president.
6 And then after that, Julie Marlette.

7 MS. KAPPEN: May I please start?

8 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Yes.

9 MS. KAPPEN: Good afternoon. My name
10 is Bernadette Kappen. I'm the executive
11 director of the New York Institute for
12 Special Education in the Bronx. And I have
13 with me Vivian Higueta, a student at the
14 institute, and Tim Kelly, the superintendent
15 of St. Mary's School for the Deaf in Buffalo.

16 I'm here today as a co-chair of the
17 4201 Association. As you know, we're
18 11 schools made up of schools for deaf,
19 blind, and children with severe physical
20 disabilities, and we service the entire
21 state -- Buffalo, Rochester, the New York
22 City area, including Brooklyn, Bronx, Queens.
23 So we are not just located in one area. And
24 we're proud to serve the State of New York.

1 We submitted our testimony, and I'll
2 make a few comments. We are really pleased
3 and we thank each of you for supporting us
4 each year in our efforts. Last year we were
5 really pleased to be able to receive the 2.4
6 percent increase that was applied to our
7 budget, and this was the first increase that
8 we had received in six years. The addition
9 has helped us, but we're asking at this point
10 in the process that we would be considered to
11 be on par with the school districts. If
12 there's an increase -- we know there's a
13 slight increase for the districts -- that
14 that would also be shared with us.

15 We have exceptional needs for our
16 children. Many of the aids and devices that
17 children need to be successful in school are
18 quite expensive, and we want to make sure
19 that they are up to par and that they're also
20 being able to achieve at a high level. We
21 were very pleased and we thank so many of you
22 for supporting us in the Smart Schools Bond
23 Act several years ago, and this will really
24 help us provide the appropriate technology

1 that our children need.

2 So once again, we're really looking
3 that we're able to increase our funds to be
4 able to provide a high-quality education. We
5 can tell you that we have positive outcomes,
6 and we've been listening to that today. In
7 many of our schools, our children are on
8 academic par. In some of the schools the
9 children have more significant disabilities,
10 but they're achieving citizens. Our schools
11 are able to tell you that we have a 100
12 percent graduation rate at our schools and
13 many of the students are going on to higher
14 education and careers. So whatever you share
15 with us, we try to pass on to the students,
16 to be as successful as they can.

17 One issue that we have faced in our
18 schools -- one campus is celebrating its
19 200th anniversary this year, the New York
20 Institute is celebrating 125 years. We ask
21 you to consider a one-time investment of
22 \$11 million for deferred capital
23 improvements. And this would be things like
24 roof repairs, plumbing, different audio

1 alerting devices in the schools for school
2 safety. This is not cosmetic, it's totally
3 to be able to provide appropriate health and
4 safety for the students in the schools.

5 I brought with me today Vivian, and I
6 think she's the best example of why we really
7 want you to consider increasing our amount
8 this year. Because our children -- someone
9 like Vivian is an individual who has been a
10 leader in school, she's been involved in many
11 different fundraisers at school for other
12 charitable organizations, she's an athlete
13 and an all-around scholar.

14 And she'll share with you a few
15 comments. So Vivian?

16 MS. HIGUITA: Thank you, Dr. Kappen.

17 And thank you, members of the
18 Legislature.

19 My name is Vivian Higueta. I go to
20 the New York Institute for Special Education.
21 I have been a student at the institute since
22 2003. And I live in College Point, Queens,
23 with my family. And we cheer for the Mets
24 and the Yankees.

1 (Laughter.)

2 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: All right.

3 MS. HIGUITA: My favorite subjects are
4 math as well as practical instruction that
5 readies me for the real world. I am visually
6 impaired. My vision is 20/250. And while
7 I'm not blind, my vision is severely limited.
8 And without the benefits of numerous
9 surgeries, technologies, and specialized
10 instruction, I would not be able to read,
11 write, or conduct the everyday activities you
12 may take for granted.

13 With my right eye I get to see, and
14 with the help of several specialized devices
15 I can write and read. These include my
16 handheld magnifier; a VisioBook to provide
17 mobile magnification of written material; a
18 Victor Stream to provide downloaded audio
19 content; a telescope for assistance with
20 long-distance vision, such as in an
21 auditorium or theatre; and my iPad. These
22 are essential devices for those who are
23 visually impaired or with low vision, such as
24 my classmates.

1 Many of my classmates reside on our
2 campus five days a week, while others, such
3 as myself, get up each morning to board a
4 school bus.

5 For each of us to succeed and to
6 accomplish our future goals, we need a school
7 such as the institute to accommodate our
8 needs. And the individualized instruction we
9 receive from our teachers also helps us
10 understand challenging materials.

11 When I graduate from the institute, it
12 is my goal to enroll at Queens College, where
13 I would like to study vocational education,
14 in the hope of providing the type of support
15 to others that I have received.

16 I am here today because I want to be a
17 participant in the process. Today is my 18th
18 birthday, and I am committed to lending my
19 voice to advocate for my classmates and
20 friends who are blind, deaf, or severely
21 disabled.

22 Thank you.

23 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NOLAN: Well, happy
24 birthday.

1 ALL: Happy Birthday.

2 MS. HIGUITA: Thank you.

3 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NOLAN: We're thrilled
4 that you spent it doing something for others
5 and coming up to Albany and -- thank you so
6 much for being here today.

7 MS. KAPPEN: We say, in summary, then,
8 that we really hope that you support the
9 increase that's been listed in the Executive
10 Budget for us, to think about increased
11 parity with the school districts, and \$11
12 million toward a one-time investment to
13 improve our schools.

14 I leave you with a quote from Helen
15 Keller, where she says "Life is either a
16 great adventure or nothing at all." And
17 that's what the 4201 schools are all about.
18 Each day is an adventure. For the students
19 we work with, they bring joy to us and they
20 will be outstanding citizens in the future.

21 So thanks for hearing us.

22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NOLAN: Are you going to
23 add a word, Mr. Kelly?

24 MR. KELLY: No, just thank you for

1 including us in the Smart Bond Act that you
2 did before. Thank you.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Just as you get up, I
4 want to say thank you. You guys are here
5 every year. And I think the reason we're
6 finally making progress with this is because
7 of the outreach that has been done by
8 advocates -- bringing your students out,
9 having legislators visit, and just growing
10 the understanding of what goes on in those
11 schools.

12 I happen to have, bordering on my
13 district, Mill Neck up on the north part and
14 the Henry Viscardi School in the middle part
15 of my district. And I've visited them both
16 several times. You're blown away every time,
17 and we know that the investments we make
18 there are, you know, going directly to
19 providing opportunities for those students.

20 So thank you for the work you do, and
21 I know you have a lot of support among those
22 of us sitting up here.

23 MS. KAPPEN: Thank you. We appreciate
24 everything you do.

1 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you.

2 MS. HIGUITA: Thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Next, Mr. William
4 Wolff, president, New York State Coalition of
5 853 Schools.

6 After him will be Julie Marlette,
7 director of government relations.

8 MR. WOLFF: Good afternoon, everybody.
9 I'm Bill Wolff, the executive director of
10 Albany's LaSalle School and also the
11 president of the New York State Coalition of
12 853 Schools.

13 And from where I sat I could watch her
14 clock, and I was glad to give her my time, at
15 least part of it.

16 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: No, we'll take it.

17 MR. WOLFF: Yeah. We appreciate the
18 increasing awareness you all have for our
19 schools among members of the Legislature, and
20 your growing interest in understanding the
21 valuable services we offer and the challenges
22 we face.

23 In the last few years this has
24 resulted in critically important

1 consideration for growth in our funding that
2 is in line with state-supported school aid,
3 has assured our eligibility for important
4 initiatives like the Smart Schools Bond Act,
5 and more.

6 In the complete testimony we shared
7 you'll see that we're seeking your support to
8 build on this recent progress, first by
9 assisting our schools in the recruitment,
10 retention, and professional development of
11 the highly qualified and certified teachers
12 we employ. You will see that we are seeking
13 a continuation of the productive work
14 underway with the State Education Department
15 and the Division of Budget with respect to
16 the reform of the tuition methodology that
17 drives the funds for all of New York's 853
18 programs.

19 And you will see that we are seeking a
20 means to address growing deficiencies in the
21 facilities we own and operate, knowing that a
22 strategic approach to solving these issues
23 today will prove beneficial in the long run.

24 And additionally, in the days ahead,

1 you will hear of our interest to secure
2 resolution of the serious consequences for
3 our programs that too often develop at the
4 points where the policies and regulations of
5 one monitoring state agency intersect, or it
6 might be better to say collide, with those of
7 another state agency also charged with
8 similar responsibilities involving the
9 children served in our programs.

10 When we are all stuck, we need your
11 help to unravel these circumstances so our
12 programs are not unnecessarily placed at risk
13 and the overall needs of children we care for
14 remain our shared priority.

15 On the whole, you will see that we're
16 seeking investments by government and
17 opportunities to partner in order to ensure
18 that the children we serve benefit from our
19 state's long-standing commitment to education
20 for its youngest citizens.

21 The 853 schools throughout the state,
22 including the 44 or so that are members of
23 the 853 Coalition, serve about 15,000
24 school-age children and play a significant

1 role in New York's priority of offering all
2 of our children the opportunity to develop
3 intellectually, socially, and emotionally.

4 When we make these investments in
5 child and family well-being, of which
6 education is an absolutely essential
7 component, we are in fact making an
8 investment in the future prosperity of our
9 communities. Schools like mine and others in
10 the 853 Coalition work with seriously
11 traumatized children. Sometimes we are
12 described as their last chance or their only
13 hope. What I know is how seriously
14 wounded -- emotionally, intellectually, and
15 very often physically -- the young people are
16 that I see every day.

17 Emerging science tells us that the
18 future for many children can be seriously
19 undermined when prolonged toxic stress
20 damages the early architecture of the brain.
21 For a child, the stress can come from a
22 variety of sources, including physical abuse,
23 sexual abuse, fear of violence, neglect due
24 to caregiver substance abuse, and more.

1 We know that the damage inflicted by
2 adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs, can
3 weaken the foundation of the neurological
4 system. We know that ACEs can also seriously
5 impair how the brain develops during
6 adolescence. The Centers for Disease Control
7 recently recognized ACEs as a public health
8 concern, citing correlations to low rates of
9 school completion, lack of adult
10 employability, and sustained household
11 poverty.

12 When we invest in family well-being,
13 which for children is anchored by education
14 and includes such things as early childhood
15 development and building resiliency in
16 adolescence, we help to ensure that a child's
17 neurological foundation will be more durable.
18 Such durability contributes to the long-term
19 opportunities a child has to fully
20 participate in and contribute to the
21 prosperity of his or her community.

22 Across New York, 853 programs are
23 among those on the leading edge of employing
24 brain science to inform practice. For the

1 children and families most at risk for
2 long-term complications due to ACEs and toxic
3 stress, we are helping them build resiliency,
4 learn relevant skills, benefit from rigorous
5 curriculum and instruction, and guide them
6 towards stability so they may open the door
7 to an independent and more prosperous life.

8 This is what 853 schools do. And as a
9 result of our continuing efforts and wise
10 investments, it is what we all together do
11 for our state's most vulnerable children.

12 Thank you very much for the
13 opportunity to speak today.

14 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Yes. Thank you.

15 Mr. Abinanti?

16 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: Thank you,
17 Mr. Chairman.

18 Just very briefly, just so -- first of
19 all, thank you for your efforts and what you
20 do.

21 MR. WOLFF: You're welcome.

22 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: I just want to
23 understand -- you're on a rate-based system?

24 MR. WOLFF: Yes, we're on a

1 tuition-funded system set by the State of New
2 York and the Division of the Budget.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: Are your rates
4 --

5 MR. WOLFF: Historical rates.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: -- the same
7 thing as the Special Act schools? Is that
8 the same type of --

9 MR. WOLFF: Exactly. It's the same
10 rate system that we're working
11 collaboratively with State Ed and the
12 Division of Budget to -- we make good
13 progress with it; there's still more work to
14 do.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: Now, how many
16 years did you go without a rate increase?

17 MR. WOLFF: There is a -- there's
18 about five -- five to six, depending on
19 exactly how you look at it. And in the last
20 few years we've been catching back up.

21 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: Okay.

22 MR. WOLFF: The system is running now,
23 but of course we had those years of zero,
24 which really put a lot of us behind --

1 behind, in trouble.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: Is there
3 anything in this budget in particular
4 referenced to the 853 schools?

5 MR. WOLFF: I'm not so sure so much in
6 the budget itself. It's often handled, some
7 of the funding -- the rate methodology is
8 actually handled outside of the budget
9 process. But there is -- on some cases,
10 we've put legislation or legislative language
11 in the budget. But, you know, that's one of
12 the opportunities for them.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: Do you have any
14 language that you would like us to --

15 MR. WOLFF: I can see that it gets
16 here from -- yeah.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: If you could.

18 MR. WOLFF: Mm-hmm. Sure.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: Thank you very
20 much.

21 MR. WOLFF: Okay.

22 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you.

23 Julie Marlette, director of
24 governmental relations; Brian Fessler, senior

1 governmental relations representative,
2 New York State School Boards Association.

3 MS. MARLETTE: Good afternoon.

4 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Good afternoon.

5 And we're going -- the next will be
6 Robert Lowry. Yes.

7 MS. MARLETTE: So thank you so much
8 for allowing us a few minutes to speak at the
9 end of the day. You've all kept a great
10 amount of energy given the lateness of the
11 hour. And so, in deference to that, I will
12 take my shortened remarks and further
13 truncate them, knowing that you have it in
14 writing in front of you.

15 My name is Julie Marlette. I'm the
16 director of governmental relations for the
17 New York State School Boards Association.
18 And we're here today to share with you what
19 we've shared with you in writing, which is a
20 request for a minimum increase of
21 \$2.3 billion over what was provided in the
22 2015 budget.

23 Rather than break out a lot of numbers
24 at this time of the day and repeat things

1 you've heard before, I think I would start by
2 answering questions I imagine would have been
3 asked earlier and acknowledge that we
4 understand we're asking for a great deal.
5 But a great deal is what we believe is needed
6 to allow our districts to provide the
7 services and programs that our students need
8 to succeed.

9 There's been a great deal of
10 discussion today about what it takes to be a
11 successful school and the college and
12 career-ready programs, including CTE,
13 services for ELLs, and other specified
14 programs, especially in our most struggling
15 schools. And we agree that those additional
16 influxes of aid are needed for those
17 specified programs. We support the CTE
18 salary increase; we support special services
19 aid increases; we support directed funding to
20 our struggling schools and support the
21 building of community schools.

22 But at its base, unless we make a
23 significant investment in the general
24 Operating Aid for our districts, all of these

1 dedicated streams will continue to be a patch
2 rather than a solution. We would request
3 that there be \$1.5 billion in additional
4 Foundation Aid this year and that we
5 eliminate the Gap Elimination Adjustment.
6 The blending of these two aids is critically
7 important to ensure that we provide aid to
8 all types and kinds of districts. And we
9 further hope to see, at a minimum, every
10 district be held harmless and receive at
11 least the funding they received in the 2015
12 budget.

13 State aid is more important than ever
14 this year because, as you've heard
15 ad nauseam, we have essentially a zero
16 percent tax cap. Zero-point-one-two percent
17 leaves little if any ability for our locals
18 to raise revenue at the local level through
19 their tax levies. While we certainly won't
20 have final numbers for a number of weeks, if
21 you simply look at that calculation against
22 the median tax levy in this state, you're
23 talking about a potential \$18,000 increase.

24 I think when we look at the

1 change, reporting changes, looking at our
2 reimbursable aid categories, there could be
3 some money left at the end of each year. We
4 would hope that this year you could consider
5 including language in the budget that would
6 direct any monies left that were appropriated
7 for the support of public schools to go
8 directly to public schools -- whether it's in
9 further paying down of prior-year claims,
10 whether it's further money for the GEA and
11 Foundation Aid, or towards any of the
12 dedicated programs that we've outlined in our
13 proposal for English language learners, for
14 districts dealing with enrollment spikes, for
15 expansion of pre-kindergarten, or anything
16 else that would really help our schools
17 succeed.

18 At that, I'll use just a few seconds
19 to say thank you again, I'm certainly happy
20 to answer any questions you may have, and to
21 give a closing message to one of our members,
22 the chancellor: We too are celebrating
23 College Recognition Day, as we do every
24 Wednesday, in honor of the excellent public

1 university education we received as both
2 undergraduates and graduates here at UAlbany.

3 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you.

4 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you very
5 much.

6 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Assemblyman
7 Abinanti.

8 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: Thank you,
9 Mr. Chairman.

10 There's one topic I've been raising
11 over and over again, and that's special
12 education --

13 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: You are going to
14 stop at some point, right?

15 (Laughter.)

16 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: Yes, I will.

17 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Try tonight.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: But there's one
19 group of schools that has not been
20 represented here today. And they're about 10
21 Special Act schools in the state or so, and I
22 represent half of them.

23 And I'm understanding from them that
24 they're in desperate straits. Their funding

1 formula is similar to the 853 schools. Can
2 you discuss their situation? Are you -- do
3 you represent them?

4 MS. MARLETTE: I represent a number of
5 them. They are funded through the same rate
6 methodology as the 853 schools. As my
7 predecessor mentioned, there's been a great
8 deal of work and, much like all other public
9 schools, they have -- they were impacted
10 significantly by the recession and have just
11 started to come out of it now with increases
12 in the last several years.

13 We continue to work with them and the
14 department to refine the methodology to
15 ensure that it actually meets their needs.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: Just so we put
17 it on the record, very quickly, my
18 understanding is their methodology is such
19 that they get this year's rate based on their
20 costs of two years ago.

21 MS. MARLETTE: At the highest level,
22 that's correct.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: Okay. And
24 secondly, that they do not get -- in their

1 rates they do not receive what might be
2 called indirect costs, that costs that
3 include electricity and pensions and other
4 increases like that don't get factored in.

5 Are you familiar with that problem?

6 MS. MARLETTE: Direct and indirect
7 costs are both included. They are weighted,
8 and there's a balance that has to go on.
9 From there, it becomes a lot more complicated
10 a lot more quickly, but they -- there is a
11 balance that has to be considered between
12 those two cost categories.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: Okay. Because
14 they're asking for special legislation to
15 correct that problem, because I'm
16 understanding that some of the Special Act
17 schools have actually borrowed monies to meet
18 operating costs and now can't pay back the
19 loans.

20 MS. MARLETTE: My understanding is
21 that both the Special Acts and the 853s
22 generally do have to operate under RANs,
23 revenue anticipation notes, so that they are
24 able to meet their costs due to cash-flow

1 issues throughout the year.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: Okay. Thank
3 you.

4 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you very
5 much.

6 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you.

7 MS. MARLETTE: Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Next, Robert Lowry,
9 deputy director, New York State Council of
10 School Superintendents.

11 After him will be Michael Borges,
12 executive director.

13 MR. LOWRY: Chairwoman Young, Chairman
14 Farrell, Chairwoman Nolan, and other members
15 of the Assembly and Senate, I'm Robert Lowry,
16 deputy director of the State Council of
17 School Superintendents.

18 I'll try to make seven points pretty
19 quickly.

20 First, thank you for your past
21 support, and please know that it makes a
22 difference. Every year since 2011 we've been
23 doing surveys of superintendents about the
24 financial conditions of their schools; this

1 was the first year we've ever had more
2 superintendents say their condition improved
3 rather than worsened. And the survey also
4 shows that they see improvements in specific
5 program areas, instruction at each of the
6 grade levels.

7 There are still worries. Sixty-nine
8 percent of school superintendents say they're
9 worried about their district's reliance on
10 reserves to pay recurring costs, and the
11 concerns are typically deepest among
12 superintendents leading the poorest school
13 districts.

14 Second, superintendents, their boards,
15 and business officials are still evaluating
16 how the new budget, the Governor's budget,
17 might affect the choices they have to present
18 to voters in May. But the primary reaction
19 we see so far is discouragement. They're
20 worried that positions and programs that they
21 were finally able to begin restoring this
22 year, they may have to turn around and cut
23 back next year.

24 Third, the allowable increase under

1 the property tax cap really permits only a
2 minuscule level of help to schools. It's
3 0.12 percent. With that, over half the
4 districts cannot raise \$25,000 in additional
5 support, and less than a quarter of the
6 districts in the state could raise enough
7 money to save the job of an early career
8 teacher with typical compensation.

9 Fourth, end the Gap Elimination
10 Adjustment. It was born in the depths of the
11 Great Recession when the state faced huge
12 budget gaps. Those are gone, it's time for
13 the GEA to be gone. The chart on the bottom
14 of page 5 of my testimony indicates a couple
15 of things about the GEA and about school aid
16 in general. The gray bars show how much
17 districts are losing this year per pupil from
18 the GEA; the blue bars show how much they'd
19 still be losing if the Governor's budget were
20 enacted. It shows that average-need
21 districts, your typical upstate suburban
22 districts, are being hurt the most by what's
23 left of the GEA.

24 But the chart shows something else.

1 Look at the high-need rural districts. If we
2 fully eliminated the GEA, they'd only get \$13
3 more per pupil and they'd only get \$1 more
4 per pupil above what the Governor has
5 proposed in his budget. So we need increases
6 in Foundation Aid, and that's the next point
7 I would make.

8 With a restrictive property tax cap,
9 and with no further action on mandate relief,
10 schools will continue to need really strong
11 state support. The Foundation Aid formula
12 was an underappreciated accomplishment in
13 public policy -- it promised the neediest
14 districts the greatest aid per pupil and
15 promised all districts more predictable state
16 support going forward. Some of its
17 assumptions do need to be revisited.

18 We also urge revisiting the tax cap.
19 Everyone seems to think it's 2 percent; make
20 2 percent the threshold for requiring a
21 60 percent supermajority for voter approval.

22 The last thing I'll say is given the
23 need to prioritize funding concerns in
24 schools, we were encouraged that this budget

1 does not present new reform initiatives for
2 us to debate and potentially for our members
3 and other local leaders and teachers to
4 implement. I want to say we're also
5 encouraged by our interactions with
6 Commissioner Elia and the team she's
7 assembling at the State Education Department.
8 They need to be given the time and the
9 financial support to make the administrative
10 and regulatory changes that can improve our
11 state's education policies.

12 Thank you for your time, and I'd be
13 happy to try and answer any questions.

14 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you very
15 much.

16 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NOLAN: I just want to
17 say again to you, Bob, how much I
18 appreciate -- I said it to, I know, one or
19 two others today, but -- what it's meant to
20 me personally to have such a wonderful
21 cooperative relationship with you personally
22 and of course the superintendents. And the
23 give-and-take. You know, you're not afraid
24 to ask tough questions when we get together,

1 and I'm able to ask tough questions, so much
2 so that I know I've aggravated some of the
3 superintendents over the years. But I really
4 appreciate the dialog, and it makes a
5 difference to us in our analysis.

6 And I'm sorry we had such a rushed
7 time together but, you know, our door is
8 always open to you and your organization, and
9 we look forward to many, many more
10 conversations. Thank you.

11 MR. LOWRY: Thank you very much.

12 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you.

13 Michael Borges, executive director,
14 New York State Association of School Business
15 Officials.

16 And after that will be Fred Koelbel.

17 MR. BORGES: Good evening, everyone.
18 Thank you for allowing me to speak,
19 especially Chairman Farrell, Committee Chair
20 Nolan, and the rest of the panel here
21 tonight.

22 First of all, I just want to make sure
23 that everybody in the room has received their
24 school district fact books that we talked

1 earlier of doing. We hope you find it very
2 useful in determining what your school
3 districts are getting. If there's any
4 suggestions on making it better, please don't
5 hesitate to contact us.

6 Secondly, you should have gotten a
7 letter in the last week or so from me about
8 changes you made, the Legislature made, to
9 the tax cap last year which have not been
10 implemented by the Department of Tax and
11 Finance. The two changes that you made were
12 two technical changes that we have been
13 advocating for the last three years -- that
14 would allow BOCES capital expenditures to be
15 included as an exclusion, and also adding
16 PILOT properties to the tax base growth
17 factor that would actually allow school
18 districts, especially in the year where we're
19 facing basically a zero percent tax cap, will
20 allow us to raise more revenue locally than
21 we otherwise would.

22 So far we have not received any
23 responses from Tax and Finance. I know many
24 of you have contacted the department;

1 payment this year and then phasing in the
2 rest over the next three more years after
3 that. The Executive proposal calls for
4 \$991 million in additional school aid, but in
5 putting that into perspective, only
6 \$266 million is actually new money. If you
7 look at our chart on page 2 of our
8 presentation, you can see that over the last
9 couple of years the increases have been
10 modest and increasing, but the fact that the
11 bulk of the money is really for restoring the
12 GEA, which is money that is already owed to
13 school districts, and reimbursable aids,
14 categorical aids, money that school districts
15 have already spent that they're getting
16 reimbursed for.

17 So the amount of actually new money is
18 in the blue, and so far the Governor's only
19 proposing 266 of that. And we think we can
20 do better.

21 Also, I wanted to point out that the
22 STAR -- no one's really talked about STAR
23 tonight, and I just want to point out that
24 the changes to STAR that the Governor is

1 proposing will have ramifications for school
2 districts. Supposedly they are
3 revenue-neutral, that they're just basically
4 reimbursing taxpayers through their income
5 taxes as opposed to their property taxes, but
6 it will have an impact on property taxes.

7 When the taxpayers get their bill,
8 they no longer see their rebate or their tax
9 deduction -- STAR -- on their property tax
10 bills, and they're going to look at their
11 school district and say, Why are my taxes
12 going up by \$400 or \$600 or whatever their
13 STAR rebate would have been. So we're kind
14 of alarmed by that, and we hope the
15 Legislature will address that as well.

16 No one has talked about the minimum
17 wage. We had done a survey of our members
18 over the summer, I think, or the fall, when
19 this first came out. We're not for or
20 against the minimum wage increase, we just
21 want to point out that there are fiscal
22 ramifications to school districts, to all
23 local governments about increasing the
24 minimum wage, and someone has to pick up the

1 tab for that.

2 And last but not least, we also wanted
3 to point out that even though school
4 districts are doing a better job at being
5 more efficient, our costs are still going up.
6 I think on page 4 or 5 of our presentation
7 you can see that costs for special education
8 continue to rise; costs for teacher
9 retirement have doubled since 2007, despite
10 contribution rates fluctuating and going
11 down; schools in New York State spend
12 \$6 billion a year on healthcare, and it
13 continues to rise every single year. And our
14 revenues have sort of been remaining kind of
15 flat, and particularly this year, with the
16 zero percent tax cap, even flatter.

17 So we are doing a better job of being
18 more efficient, we just need more assistance,
19 more help from the Legislature and state to
20 reduce our mandates, make us even more
21 efficient, particularly in a year where we're
22 having a zero percent tax cap, and hopefully
23 we can make up some for that difference in
24 higher state aid from the state and

1 recognizing that.

2 So with that, I'll end, and if there's
3 any questions.

4 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you very
5 much.

6 MR. BORGES: Thank you.

7 SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you.

8 ASSEMBLYMAN OAKS: Just thank you very
9 much for those charts. They're great, thank
10 you.

11 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: New York School
12 Facilities Association, Fred Koelbel, chair,
13 legislative committee.

14 The next person after him will be Dave
15 Little.

16 MR. KOELBEL: Good evening.

17 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Good evening.

18 MR. KOELBEL: New York State School
19 Facilities Association represents -- we have
20 600 members representing over 700 of
21 New York's public school districts. We
22 dedicate ourselves to providing a clean,
23 adequate, well-ventilated, well-lit space
24 that says to the students and staff that what

1 you do here is important.

2 Just very quickly, we're asking for
3 support for the New York State Facilities'
4 office of facilities planning. We thank you
5 for the funding you gave last year, which
6 helped increase their staff and get it back
7 to {inaudible} level.

8 This year in particular, we're looking
9 at -- the software system that they run the
10 whole office on, they purchased in 1987, it
11 runs on DOS. I don't think I need to say
12 anything more than that. Some of you might
13 be old enough to remember DOS, you know. So
14 they're looking -- we encourage you to
15 provide the funding to replace that system.
16 I know, literally to communicate from the
17 facilities planning office to the state aid
18 office, somebody copies it onto a disk and
19 walks it down to the other office. So enough
20 said.

21 Okay. School safety funds, we thank
22 you and appreciate that the NYSAFE Act in the
23 Executive Budget will be extended this year.
24 One thing we'd like you to look at and work

1 on is how can we get that funding to BOCES
2 schools. You know, it's time to really look
3 at a lot of things, the ways BOCES is
4 funded -- but to say that those students,
5 some of our neediest students, don't get the
6 same funding for safe schools, for cameras
7 and other things, that's kind of hard.

8 Also, we're looking for maintenance
9 funding, asking for support for
10 Assemblymember Englebright's, Senator
11 Valesky's bill which establishes minimum
12 levels of maintenance for schools and makes
13 that funding outside the cap. We're the
14 stepchild -- I mean, we've heard a lot of
15 school districts today talk about the
16 condition of their facilities. We struggle
17 many days when we look for solutions, we look
18 for something that gets us by. There are a
19 lot of things that, if districts had the
20 right funding, they could do that would
21 reduce the annual operating budget -- things
22 like energy performance and things like that.

23 Speaking of BOCES one last time,
24 capital projects within BOCES, it's

1 impossible to get them funded, because how
2 many school districts are going to say, Yeah,
3 let's go for that, I got a .15 or .12 cap
4 myself, let me give you some more money?

5 We need to find a way to fund the
6 capital projects for BOCES. I know Senator
7 Marcellino and others worked on that this
8 year, but it doesn't seem like it's moved
9 along.

10 Lastly, we're back again this year
11 with an energy reserve fund which is
12 sponsored by Assemblymember Cahill and
13 Senator Funke. What we're looking to do is
14 establish another reserve fund for school
15 districts to allow them to create a reserve
16 fund for energy. If any of you sitting up
17 here could tell me that a year ago you
18 thought -- like I gassed up before I left
19 Long Island last night; I paid \$1.89 a
20 gallon. You know, if anyone could tell me
21 they thought they were going to pay that a
22 year ago today, none of you would be here,
23 you would have been speculating long ago.

24 But we know the prices are going to go

1 back up. I can tell you I budgeted a lot
2 more money for energy this year than I'm
3 going to need. It's then a perfect
4 opportunity to take sort of that surplus this
5 year, put it in a fund for when it comes
6 back. It allows us to be a little more
7 liberal in budgeting -- but, you know, we're
8 going to put fuel in the buses, we're going
9 to heat the buildings, so when those spikes
10 come, something else is suffering. We're
11 just looking to get that cushion.

12 A lot of what we've heard in the past,
13 though, is: Oh, a reserve fund. Try and get
14 that past the Executive. When we talk to the
15 Executive, it's like, Oh, a reserve fund, try
16 and get that past the Comptroller. We talk
17 to the Comptroller -- everybody's pointing
18 fingers.

19 I think this is the year to get it
20 done and establish it.

21 Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you very
23 much.

24 ASSEMBLYMAN OAKS: Thank you.

1 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: David Little.

2 And after that will be the New York
3 State Congress of Parents and Teachers.

4 Good evening.

5 MR. LITTLE: Good evening. Thank you,
6 Mr. Chairman, legislators, and esteemed staff
7 behind them. I've been there.

8 We're not facing an economic crisis
9 this year, we're not facing a programmatic
10 crisis this year. The barrage of all of that
11 has stopped, at least for now, but we're
12 facing a legislative crisis this year.

13 The signature law of the tax cap has
14 created a circumstance for rural schools in
15 particular that has taken the 2 percent
16 increase that the Governor has proposed,
17 eliminated the funds at the local level so
18 that in effect we have a tax freeze for the
19 over half of the school districts that are
20 rural schools in New York State. They have a
21 teacher shortage because they can't attract
22 quality personnel after the years of
23 underfunding and the rhetoric, quite frankly,
24 around the teaching profession. And it's

1 very difficult to get young people to
2 relocate to rural areas to begin with, and
3 now we're -- I'm at least hearing every day
4 of school districts that are having trouble
5 trying to staff the subject matter that we
6 need.

7 The greatest crisis facing rural
8 schools -- because we do what we do well,
9 very well, we have a very high graduation
10 rate. But the breadth of curriculum that's
11 allowed to be offered in rural schools,
12 because of the greatly restricted finances,
13 has made our students non-competitive with
14 their suburban neighbors.

15 And the other thing that I don't think
16 that's generally recognized is that our rural
17 schools have many of the same social problems
18 that face our most dramatic urban areas.
19 High teen pregnancy, high drug use for
20 teenagers, high alcoholism rates and alcohol
21 use for teenagers, and largely all for the
22 same reasons. Because we have nothing for
23 them to do and no place for them to go after
24 the last bell rings of the day. There's no

1 funding left for that.

2 This circumstance of the tax cap has
3 left us dramatically underfunded to simply
4 roll over our budget from last year to the
5 present year. Education is a steady kind of
6 cumulative process from year to year, and we
7 can ill afford to have a funding stream that
8 looks like an EKG chart. It goes up or down
9 from year to year: We have local funds, we
10 don't have local funds; we have a big
11 increase, we have a big decrease.

12 You can't systematically build a
13 child's education from year to year using a
14 funding stream like that, and rural schools
15 have little to no ability to try and adjust
16 for that because they raise so little at the
17 local level to begin with.

18 And there have been times in our
19 state's history when it's been left up to our
20 rural areas to try and bail out the rest of
21 the state. We're at a point now both
22 legally, with the Campaign for Educational
23 Equity {sic} lawsuit, and legislatively where
24 we're in a fiscal position now where we don't

1 have a gap. We don't have a state budget.
2 We're growing steadily, and I think all we
3 would ask is that we allow our educational
4 system to grow steadily as well.

5 Because I think if you look, you'll
6 see that virtually every other state in the
7 union, the state pays for roughly two-thirds
8 of what it costs to educate their children.
9 And despite the fact that we're very fond of
10 saying that we pay the most per child, we do
11 pay the most per child, because some of our
12 districts can afford to pay astronomical
13 amounts per child. But we have the worst
14 distribution system in the nation for how we
15 distribute that funding.

16 And so we leave many of our children,
17 a dramatic number of our children, in the
18 lurch. If Brown v. Board of Education was
19 our forefather's great shame, then our
20 funding system is ours. And until we address
21 that, until we get the rates for places like
22 Rochester and Buffalo and, quite frankly, for
23 the educational breadth that we are not
24 currently providing to our rural students,

1 we're going to continue to face an uncertain
2 future where people are exiting our state to
3 the rate of 150,000 a year. That's dramatic.

4 The State of New York right now is
5 exactly flipped from what every other state
6 does. We're paying a little over one-third,
7 and we leave two-thirds to the local
8 taxpayer. So if you're going to leave
9 two-thirds to the local taxpayer, you'd
10 better let them raise the money if you want
11 your children to be competitive. Because
12 right now we've kept -- we've frozen what
13 they're allowed to raise at that level, which
14 means that even our wealthy districts are
15 going to have to compete for that little
16 amount of state funding that's out there with
17 our more most needy districts. That's
18 inequitable.

19 And so I would ask you to consider
20 those things as you go forward. The
21 Governor's proposals have always been
22 financially light in their initial proposal,
23 it's always up to you to fix it, I ask you to
24 do it again this year.

1 Thanks so much.

2 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you very
3 much.

4 Yes, Mr. Abinanti.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: Thank you.

6 I think you raise something that
7 hasn't been really emphasized before. You're
8 stating here, and I think it should be made
9 very clear to people what the implications
10 are, that even in your schools that pay
11 little towards their educational cost
12 locally, increasing the amount that has to
13 get paid up front through this STAR rebate
14 program change could mean the defeat of your
15 local budgets. Is that true?

16 MR. LITTLE: There are a couple of
17 places within the Governor's proposal where
18 that's expected. Pre-K is an area of that
19 where schools are expected to pay the money
20 up front and then get the money later on.

21 In this budget there's an opportunity,
22 because of the banking funding, the banking
23 fines, to be able to allocate a non-recurring
24 revenue towards that so that school districts

1 can participate in that.

2 And the one that you mentioned, the
3 STAR rebate program, is the other. Yes, they
4 can wait to get their rebate check off of
5 their income taxes, but when they get their
6 initial tax bill where they used to see that
7 being mitigated by the STAR rebate amount,
8 they'll no longer see that. And so the
9 amount that they'll look at to be paid up
10 front is going to be greater, and they will
11 of course be less supportive of that.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: Well, in simple
13 terms, people are going to think that you've
14 imposed a 10 percent tax increase when in
15 fact you're collecting the same amount of
16 money, and they're going to come out and vote
17 against budgets even though it's the same
18 budget they approved the year before, because
19 they're not going to know the details of all
20 of this stuff.

21 MR. LITTLE: And because all politics
22 is local, they'll call their local school
23 board members and administrators liars
24 because what's on their bill is not what they

1 were promised.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: Thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you.

4 SENATOR KRUEGER: I'm sorry, I do have
5 one question, Mr. Little.

6 I appreciate your testimony. We hear
7 quite a bit from the larger urban areas --
8 and I represent one in New York City -- about
9 the problems they have and the poverty rates
10 and the continuous struggle to make sure
11 students complete high school and are
12 college-ready or employment-ready. And I
13 think one of the disadvantages you face in
14 taking your pleas here to Albany is that we
15 don't necessarily get the same kind of data
16 because it's so many small rural high-needs
17 districts.

18 Can you help me understand what -- if
19 somebody's done some research about the price
20 your students are paying because we've been
21 underfunding your schools.

22 MR. LITTLE: I'm sorry, the what?

23 SENATOR KRUEGER: The price your
24 students are paying because we've been

1 underfunding the small schools. Are you
2 seeing an increased dropout rate, a decreased
3 rate of ability to graduate and be
4 college-ready or employable? Do you have
5 anybody doing that kind of statistics?

6 MR. LITTLE: First of all, as a
7 resource I would direct you to the Center for
8 Rural Schools, which is actually a center for
9 educational statistics for all schools. It
10 can do remarkable things like predict your
11 own district's performance, predict your
12 future finances, things like that -- predict
13 and compare how you rate versus other
14 districts demographically similar to your
15 own. So that might be a good resource for
16 you.

17 The dropout rate for us is not as
18 significant an issue as it is that the people
19 that we do graduate don't have a degree
20 that's worth nearly as much as their
21 neighbors.

22 I'll give you the perfect example. My
23 son had over a 90 average and was rejected
24 from a college specifically saying, Danny,

1 you're okay, but -- I won't name the school
2 district, because I was school board
3 president for 10 years there, and I thought
4 we were doing well. But because of the lack
5 of a breadth of curriculum, they said that
6 the school district was not okay and that he
7 would not fare well in trying to compete with
8 the other people that they were admitting,
9 simply because he didn't have any context to
10 put the information they wanted to give him
11 into.

12 And they were right, because the
13 school that finally did admit him, he had a
14 difficult time. He graduated, but for four
15 years he had a very difficult time trying to
16 use the information in a realistic way
17 because he had no context to put it in. It
18 was rote memorization for its own sake.

19 And so I really think that the
20 challenges for rural schools is not so many
21 in staffing, because everybody in a rural
22 area in the entire community is involved in
23 the child's education -- they know everybody,
24 right, and care about everybody, that's the

1 beauty of being there -- but they can't help
2 when there's not enough resources to be able
3 to provide a competitive curriculum to go
4 forward. And so they're being rejected for
5 jobs and rejected for college applications.
6 And so when that happens, it's a spiral for
7 that rural community that's struggling, quite
8 honestly, to keep its kids.

9 SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you very much.
10 And I'll follow through with that center.

11 MR. LITTLE: Certainly.

12 SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you.

13 MR. LITTLE: Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you.

15 New York State Congress of Parents and
16 Teachers, Mark Eagan, Capital Region Chamber.
17 Is that it?

18 ASSEMBLYMAN OAKS: Richard Longhurst.

19 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Which one are you,
20 sir? We have a little confusion. You are?

21 MR. LONGHURST: I am Rick Longhurst.
22 I'm the executive administrator of New York
23 State Congress of Parents and Teachers, or
24 PTA.

1 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Okay.

2 MR. LONGHURST: I was announced next,
3 so here I am.

4 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Yes, you are next.

5 MR. LONGHURST: Good evening.

6 Many of my colleagues have spoken very
7 eloquently about the inadequacies of state
8 aid support in the Executive proposal. I'm
9 going to skip right over that; we share
10 exactly the same concerns that they have
11 stated. But I'm going to focus on just three
12 things, and I'm going to begin by focusing on
13 just what I see as a change in tone from a
14 year ago or two years ago.

15 I've been here since 9:30 in the
16 morning, and I've seen some very good
17 examples of improvements in schools, I've
18 seen some very probing and interesting
19 questions that you have directed to the
20 people who have sat at this table, and we see
21 something different than what we've seen in
22 the past. School districts this year, unlike
23 last year, have access to state aid runs,
24 which is very important for their planning

1 process. The Governor has accepted the
2 recommendations of his Common Core Task Force
3 that are positive and that came together in a
4 very short amount of time, so my compliments
5 to those of you who participated in that
6 process.

7 The Regents responded to those
8 recommendations with their own regulations
9 very quickly, promptly, and with some options
10 that offer some real possibilities, and the
11 state now has overall flexibility that they
12 haven't had in the past to work with schools,
13 with teachers, and parents as a result of the
14 reauthorization of ESSA, the federal Every
15 Student Succeeds Act.

16 The next thing that I would like to
17 address is two things that I haven't heard
18 too much about today. But one is the area of
19 family and community engagement.

20 As we've listened to some of the
21 people who have spoken, the need for
22 collaboration between families and
23 communities and their schools is threaded
24 through a great deal of the reform efforts

1 that you see described by everyone here, from
2 struggling schools to the issues that are
3 related to men and boys of color. The
4 importance of family engagement and community
5 engagement is critical. The Regents have
6 proposed programs that would address some of
7 these issues, and we would urge your support
8 for the creation of an Office of Family and
9 Community Engagement within the Education
10 Department.

11 The inadequacy of family and community
12 engagement over the past couple of years, in
13 our view, may be partially responsible for
14 the dissatisfaction that many parents have
15 expressed through the lack of participation
16 in federally mandated student testing for
17 their students.

18 The last thing that I would like to
19 address is the area of fiscal support for the
20 New York State State Education Department.
21 We believe that it's inadequate. We've
22 looked at studies that in at least one case
23 would suggest that the state support for the
24 New York State Education Department on a

1 per-pupil basis is 46th out of 51 in this
2 country.

3 Over the past 30 years -- and my
4 career goes back into the very early '70s --
5 the state support for the State Education
6 Department has been reduced, and the program
7 assistance for schools is now almost nothing
8 as compared to what it was 30-some years ago.
9 As the diversity in the performance of our
10 student population increases, we believe that
11 the leadership on the part of the Education
12 Department is critical. And we further
13 believe that the money that you give to
14 schools in the form of state aid is going to
15 be more efficiently and effectively spent if
16 you have quality leadership at the top to
17 provide both support and monitoring from the
18 State Education Department itself.

19 Those are my comments. I can respond
20 to questions if you have them.

21 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Questions?

22 Yes, Mr. Ra.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you. I see you
24 mentioned something that a few others have

1 but many have not, and that's that regulatory
2 work alone is not going to be enough to
3 respond to some of the issues that were
4 created by last year's, you know, policy
5 initiatives in the budget.

6 I was wondering, can you at all
7 elaborate on what you would like to see from
8 the legislative side to enable -- basically,
9 to enable State Ed to go and implement a lot
10 of the recommendations of the task force?

11 MR. LONGHURST: Sure. You heard Jim
12 Viola indicate a little while ago that the
13 regulatory steps that the Regents have taken
14 were a patch, or what we would view as a
15 work-around. At the same time, you've heard
16 others -- you will have heard others say that
17 the provisions of the reform act that was
18 adopted a year ago, 3012-d, need to be
19 repealed.

20 What is going to take some time is the
21 process to involve the people and do the
22 right thinking that gets the process more
23 correct than it was the last time, the last
24 time out. So we don't believe that the

1 regulatory reform that is proposed by the
2 Regents is the long-term solution --
3 ultimately, the law will need to be
4 changed -- but it's a start and it will give
5 us the time to do the process the way it
6 needs to be done.

7 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: I fully agree. And I
8 think that the four-year moratorium on the
9 test scores should be treated as an
10 opportunity to once and for all get a teacher
11 evaluation system right so we're not
12 revisiting it time and time again every few
13 years.

14 MR. LONGHURST: We need to take full
15 advantage of that opportunity.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Absolutely. Look
17 forward to working with you and many other
18 groups on that. Thank you.

19 MR. LONGHURST: Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you.

21 SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you very much.

22 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Kyle Rosenkrans,
23 Northeast Charter School Network.

24 Then after him would be Randi Levine.

1 MR. ROSENKRANS: Thank you, Chairman
2 Farrell, distinguished Senators and
3 Assemblypersons. Thank you for your stamina,
4 number one, but thanks for the chance to
5 speak before you here today.

6 My name is Kyle Rosenkrans, and I am
7 the CEO of the Northeast Charter Schools
8 Network. We're the statewide membership
9 organization for charter schools. Across the
10 state we represent 8,000 teachers and over
11 120,000 students now in over 250 schools,
12 schools from Suffolk County, Long Island, out
13 to Niagara Falls and everywhere in between --
14 small, large, independent and networked,
15 union and non-union.

16 And I'm here to testify in support of
17 the Governor's budget proposal as it relates
18 to charter schools, but also to highlight one
19 critically missing piece to that proposal
20 that we think is essential to completing the
21 package.

22 First, we support unfreezing the
23 funding formula for students in New York City
24 charter schools and the rest of the state in

1 the following year. We support the proposal
2 in the Aid to Localities budget that would
3 distribute equally, to all charter school
4 students in the state, an additional
5 \$27 million. And we support making permanent
6 the rental aid calculation for students who
7 attend charter schools, new or growing
8 charter schools in New York City.

9 But I'm also here to ask for your
10 support in making this proposal better and
11 solving the single biggest policy problem
12 that's still facing charter school educators
13 around the state, and that's finding and
14 affording school buildings.

15 Under the current law, a charter
16 student from, let's say, Buffalo receives no
17 help from the state to ensure that they have
18 an adequate school facility. So they can be
19 equally poor, equally disadvantaged to a
20 charter school student in New York City, but
21 they get no state help for their school
22 buildings. And all because of where that
23 student happened to live and where that
24 school happened to be located.

1 And moreover, in some of our oldest
2 charter schools in the state -- schools that
3 have been with us 17 years, in many cases, in
4 New York City -- aren't getting help either,
5 solely because they're no longer growing.
6 The state law only supports the facility
7 needs of schools that are new or growing. So
8 a school like Harriet Tubman Charter School,
9 performing well, students enjoy the school,
10 but solely because their school is not
11 growing, they don't have a guarantee of state
12 support for a building or funding to pay for
13 that building.

14 Other states have found a way to fix
15 this problem. And honestly, I think if we
16 were drawing the Charter Schools Act up again
17 from scratch, we would find a solution to
18 make sure that every kid who attends a
19 charter school has an adequate school
20 facility of some sort. So we're asking for
21 your help in bringing greater equity to the
22 way we fund and provide school buildings to
23 students in charter schools across the state
24 this year.

1 And then, in closing, I'd like to talk
2 about the issue of charter school enrollment.
3 It's been in the news lately, and I'd like to
4 offer three things that I think are important
5 to know.

6 The first is study after study -- and
7 as recently as just a couple of days ago --
8 have found that, much to the contrary to our
9 friends at UFT and Mr. Mulgrew's comments
10 earlier to you today, charter students
11 actually do a better job of retaining
12 high-needs students. That is, at a higher
13 rate. This is numerous years' studies by
14 both Marcus Winters and by the New York City
15 IBO have found that high-needs students
16 actually stay in charter schools at a higher
17 rate. And so the myth that as a movement we
18 are pushing out high-needs kids, pushing out
19 kids just because they're hard to educate,
20 doesn't hold up to the data or the evidence.

21 Now, to the extent that there are
22 allegations that individual charter schools
23 are breaking the rules, they should be
24 investigated. And if those claims are

1 substantiated, there should be consequences.
2 That's how we should treat any school in this
3 state. But it is a myth to suggest that this
4 is a sort of statewide or citywide problem.

5 The second thing that's important to
6 know is that the UFT's own data -- we
7 reviewed their report they released earlier
8 this week, and they have a legislative
9 proposal before you all -- that data showed
10 that we've actually doubled the amount of ELL
11 students who are attending charter schools in
12 New York City, and we increased the amount of
13 special education students by 40 percent.
14 Those are their numbers.

15 And lastly, I think the policy
16 prescription that they propose is just wrong.
17 It's doubling down in what we think is a
18 broken system for policing enrollment numbers
19 at charter schools. Just to illustrate that
20 example, we took a look at the same standards
21 that are intended to apply to charter schools
22 for enrollment of high-needs students. If
23 you applied those to district schools in the
24 state, for example in Rochester, 46 district

1 schools, only seven of those 46 would meet
2 all three of the targets we're asking charter
3 schools to make. And nowhere in the UFT's
4 proposals do they propose that those schools
5 be penalized. Nor would I, but I ask why
6 we're applying those standards to charter
7 schools if our district schools can't even
8 meet them.

9 The same is true if you look at CSD 5
10 in Harlem and other school districts across
11 the state, that there's something wrong with
12 the standards, so now is not the time to
13 double down on enforcement. It means to give
14 authorizers greater flexibility, to make more
15 fine-tuned comparisons between schools. And
16 we think that's the proper solution.

17 So again, thank you for the chance to
18 speak before you. If you have any questions,
19 I'm happy to answer them. Otherwise, I hope
20 you get home safe.

21 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Yes, Mr. Abinanti.

22 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: Yes. I just
23 would like to ask you -- do you think it's
24 fair to a person who lives in a suburban

1 community, who pays \$15,000 to \$25,000 a year
2 in property taxes, who gets \$1,800 back from
3 the state to subsidize the kids' education --
4 that's per-pupil expenditure in much of
5 Westchester County; some get \$950, some get
6 \$4,000, but in general it's probably about
7 \$2,000 -- and who pays high income taxes to
8 the State of New York, do you think it's fair
9 to tell them that they can't get any more
10 money back from the state because we don't
11 have the money, because we're giving it to
12 private schools that masquerade as charter
13 schools in the City of New York?

14 MR. ROSENKRANS: Well, I think --
15 thank you for the question -- I think I have
16 a little bit of a different view on the
17 topic. To me, and I'm a civil rights lawyer
18 by trade, I look at the fact that public
19 education is a constitutional right that
20 belongs to the students, and in my view that
21 funding belongs to the students, not to
22 adults or school districts.

23 So in a charter school, when a student
24 attends a charter school, that funding for

1 them, a portion of it -- I would argue not
2 enough of it, but a proportion of it goes to
3 that charter school. So I think that funding
4 actually belongs to the student, not to the
5 school district or to the adults who work
6 there. That belongs to the students, to
7 ensure they get a constitutionally adequate
8 education.

9 And as to the question as to private
10 schools masquerading as charter schools, I
11 mean, it's written into our law that we're
12 public schools, and we take that obligation
13 very seriously. So that's just what state
14 law is, we're a public school.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: And you're
16 saying that there's a constitutional right --
17 does that mean that the kids in my school
18 district have a constitutional right to get
19 \$8,500 back -- or I think the average number
20 for the State of New York is \$9,500 -- are
21 you ready to go with me to the Governor and
22 say he should add \$5 billion to the budget so
23 that every kid in the state can get \$9,500
24 paid to their school district for their

1 education?

2 MR. ROSENKRANS: Well, I can't speak
3 to the specifics of your particular district.
4 What I will say is that I have no objection
5 to everyone here who's been speaking all day,
6 fighting to ensure that the children they
7 were speaking about get the resources they
8 need. I'm not going to stand in your way in
9 any way, shape, or form. I'm here
10 representing the charter schools that are our
11 members.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: Well, do you
13 think we would meet our constitutional
14 obligation if we had public school systems
15 that met the needs of the kids?

16 MR. ROSENKRANS: Look, I think that
17 the state's highest court has weighed on this
18 issue many times. And, you know, I'm not an
19 expert in the constitutional obligations as
20 they apply to school districts. What I can
21 say is that as they apply to students, there
22 is a minimally adequate obligation of the
23 state to provide the funding that's
24 necessary.

1 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: Correct. But
2 we can meet that minimum obligation by
3 providing a sound, basic education in a
4 public school building; correct?

5 MR. ROSENKRANS: Absolutely.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: Okay. So we
7 disagree as to how and where we should
8 provide that education. But I, for one, say
9 public schools first. And when my kids in my
10 school districts get a sufficient amount of
11 support from the state, then maybe I'll take
12 a look at other alternatively competing
13 school systems.

14 Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you. Thank
16 you very much.

17 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: I'd like to thank
18 you for being here today.

19 MR. ROSENKRANS: Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Advocates for
21 Children of New York, Randi Levine, policy
22 coordinator.

23 And after that will be Alexis Henry,
24 for the Citizens Committee for Children.

1 Yes.

2 MS. LEVINE: Good evening. Thank you
3 for the opportunity to speak with you and
4 thank you for staying and being so engaged
5 during this long day.

6 My name is Randi Levine, and I am
7 policy coordinator at Advocates for Children
8 of New York. For more than 40 years,
9 Advocates for Children has worked to promote
10 access to the best education New York can
11 provide for all students, especially students
12 of color and students from low-income
13 backgrounds. And every year, we help
14 thousands of individual families navigate the
15 education system.

16 You have our written testimony. I am
17 just going to highlight a few issues that are
18 in it. Our written testimony discusses our
19 position on a wide variety of education
20 issues within the budget. In addition to
21 echoing the call for a greater overall
22 investment in education funding, I want to
23 highlight just a few issues.

24 First, CTE, Career and Technical

1 Education programs. We were very encouraged
2 by the questions and the discussion that took
3 place today about the need for increased
4 investments in CTE. Given that more than
5 20 percent of students in New York State do
6 not graduate in four years, CTE really has
7 the potential to help those students, promote
8 student engagement and advancement toward
9 college and career readiness. The Board of
10 Regents, recognizing the importance of these
11 programs, recommends an additional
12 \$65 million for CTE.

13 Given the disproportionately low
14 graduation rates for English language
15 learners and students with disabilities, CTE
16 programs have the potential to be
17 particularly beneficial for these students.
18 However, we have identified barriers to
19 accessing CTE programs for ELLs and students
20 with disabilities.

21 The Executive Budget includes
22 \$1 million in new CTE funding specifically to
23 eliminate barriers that prevent students with
24 disabilities and ELLs from participating in

1 CTE programs. We are pleased that the
2 Governor recognized the need for this
3 designated funding. However, a significantly
4 higher investment is needed to expand CTE.
5 We urge you to invest at least an additional
6 \$65 million for CTE, including at least an
7 additional \$1 million to make CTE programs
8 accessible to students with disabilities and
9 ELLS.

10 We're grateful to you and the Governor
11 for the increased investment in pre-K over
12 the years, but we know that our job is not
13 done and that the proposed \$22 million for
14 pre-K for 3-year-olds only is not going to
15 get the job done. We support the Board of
16 Regents recommendation for providing an
17 additional \$125 million to expand full-day
18 pre-K. We want to fulfill the promise of
19 universal pre-K, full-day, throughout the
20 State of New York.

21 We're also very concerned about the
22 Executive Budget's proposed Empire State
23 Pre-Kindergarten Grant Board, which would
24 take the pre-kindergarten RFP and selection

1 process out of the hands of the State
2 Education Department and place it in the
3 hands of a three-member politically appointed
4 board, creating another level of bureaucracy
5 in an already complicated pre-kindergarten
6 system. You've heard concerns about that
7 today, and we recommend having the State
8 Education Department continue to oversee the
9 RFP and selection process for all pre-K
10 programs.

11 You've heard today about the need for
12 increased investments for English language
13 learners. The Board of Regents recommended
14 an additional \$75 million to support ELLs,
15 and we support that as well.

16 And finally, one issue that I don't
17 think we've discussed yet today. The
18 Executive Budget includes a proposal that
19 would allow school districts to seek a broad
20 waiver from special education protections for
21 students. We've seen it before. The
22 Legislature wisely has rejected it in prior
23 years, and we just want to make sure that
24 you're aware and ask you to reject that again

1 this year.

2 Thank you for your time, and I would
3 be happy to answer any questions that you
4 have.

5 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you.

6 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you very
7 much.

8 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Questions?

9 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: A quick question
10 from Senator Krueger.

11 SENATOR KRUEGER: Actually, it's just
12 a statement.

13 There are many groups who come and
14 testify, and coming from New York City I just
15 want to recognize and thank your organization
16 for the tremendous work they do. We refer
17 parents who are lost and confused and don't
18 know what to be doing next, particularly for
19 their special-needs children, to you all the
20 time and to the materials you have available.
21 And the information that you provide really
22 is invaluable to parents. So thank you.

23 MS. LEVINE: Well, we're very happy to
24 help families as well as professionals and

1 your staff, both with individual cases as
2 well as on a policy level. Thank you.

3 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Next is Citizens'
5 Committee for Children, Alexis Henry, policy
6 associate, early childhood.

7 After that, AfterSchool Works!
8 New York: New York State Afterschool Network.

9 MS. HENRY: Good afternoon.

10 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Good afternoon.

11 MS. HENRY: Or good evening.

12 My name is Alexis Henry, and I am the
13 policy associate at Citizens' Committee for
14 Children, which is a 72-year-old independent
15 multi-issue child advocacy organization.
16 Thank you to the chair and to the members of
17 the Legislature for holding today's hearing.
18 I hope to be very brief.

19 CCC is extremely concerned that cost
20 shifts included in the Governor's Executive
21 Budget will have extreme impacts on New York
22 City, especially services important to all of
23 New York's children. We urge the Legislature
24 to negotiate a budget with the Governor that

1 eliminates the cost shifts and invests
2 significantly more in the programs and
3 services that will produce outcomes for the
4 children and families throughout New York.

5 We are pleased that the Executive
6 Budget proposes investments to improve
7 quality and access to education. However,
8 funding is still not sufficient to meet the
9 needs of New York's schoolchildren. The
10 budget, as you know, has a 4.3 percent
11 increase but still is woefully short of the
12 Campaign for Fiscal Equity decision. This is
13 actually the 10th anniversary, and current
14 estimates of the shortfall, when taking into
15 account inflation, are at approximately
16 \$4.8 billion. We urge the Legislature and
17 the Governor to work together to enact the
18 budget that makes significant increases in
19 education aid.

20 Pre-K. High-quality early childhood
21 education has been proven to be critical for
22 school readiness and long-term academic
23 careers and economic outcomes. We appreciate
24 the \$22 million that Governor Cuomo has

1 proposed to expand access to pre-K for
2 3-year-olds. However, this still leaves over
3 80,000 4-year-olds unserved. We urge the
4 Legislature and the Governor to invest at
5 least \$150 million to expand pre-K seats for
6 high-needs 3- and 4-year-olds.

7 We also oppose the creation of the
8 Empire State Pre-Kindergarten Grant Board.

9 We support the Governor's proposal for
10 \$100 million to transform the state's
11 struggling schools into community schools.
12 Community schools not only have positive
13 impacts on academic achievement, attendance,
14 and post-secondary outcomes, but are also
15 well positioned to address the nonacademic
16 needs a child may bring to school.

17 The special education waiver, we urge
18 the Legislature to oppose the proposal.
19 New York State law affords important
20 protections for children and families
21 receiving special education services, and
22 this waiver would erode important safeguards
23 for children.

24 We also, around mayoral control, urge

1 you to extend mayoral control for seven years
2 as part of its original authorization in
3 2002.

4 And finally, we support the Governor's
5 proposal to enact the DREAM Act, and we urge
6 the Legislature to prioritize passing the
7 bill this session. Texas, New Mexico,
8 California, Illinois, and Minnesota have
9 already extended financial assistance to
10 undocumented students, and it's time for
11 New York to do the same.

12 Thank you for the opportunity to
13 testify.

14 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you very
15 much. Questions?

16 SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you.

17 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you so much.

18 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you.

19 Chris Neitzey, AfterSchool Works! New
20 York: New York State Afterschool Network.

21 MR. NEITZEY: Good evening. Thank you
22 for the opportunity to provide my testimony.
23 My name is Chris Neitzey. I'm the
24 information and communications manager with

1 AfterSchool Works! New York: The New York
2 State Afterschool Network.

3 I'm testifying here today because we
4 believe that all New York students deserve
5 the chance to reach their full potential,
6 much like many of you probably believe as
7 well. After-school, summer, extended
8 learning opportunities, community schools,
9 and other expanded learning opportunities
10 play a crucial role in supporting success for
11 many New York families and students.

12 We've heard a lot today about the
13 \$100 million in community schools aid. I
14 want to echo previous comments that this is
15 not sufficient to support high-quality
16 community schools.

17 I would also like to focus on
18 something we haven't discussed much today.
19 Over the last year and a half, we have hosted
20 a learning community of state education
21 associations, many of whom have testified
22 here today, and the practitioners and experts
23 on expanded learning through school/community
24 partnerships. Your invitation to this actual

1 white paper release, which is going to be
2 held next week, is in the written testimony,
3 and we hope that you will join us for the
4 opportunity to see what the results of that
5 learning community are.

6 From the work of this group, we
7 learned that it is crucial that the state not
8 only equate the strategy of community schools
9 as a model for school turnaround -- many
10 schools of all types actually benefit from
11 the community school strategy and similar
12 models of partnership between schools and
13 CBOs.

14 Additionally, nationally 90 percent of
15 community schools incorporate after-school or
16 expanded learning time, which may actually be
17 higher in New York. Also, while we are
18 grateful that the Executive Budget maintains
19 funding for the Extended School Day/School
20 Violence Prevention Program, we are also
21 disappointed that there was no new proposal
22 for additional statewide after-school and
23 summer programming.

24 To that end, we are also very

1 concerned that the Executive Budget provides
2 no new funding to continue the Community
3 Schools Grant Initiative, which is different
4 than the community schools aid. The first
5 round of grants for this funding stream ends
6 this year, leaving 30 grantees without
7 funding to sustain the community schools they
8 have worked to develop over the last three
9 years. These schools have structures and
10 programs in place that students and families
11 have come to rely on, and that support
12 teachers by ensuring students come to class
13 ready to learn.

14 If these programs are allowed to close
15 without the opportunity to seek another round
16 of funding, the loss will impact the
17 teachers, students, families, and communities
18 they serve. The Legislature should not allow
19 for this loss, and it is urgent that the
20 funding be restored in this year's budget to
21 allow for continuity.

22 We hope that the Legislature will
23 provide at least \$15 million this year to
24 continue the Community Schools Grant

1 Initiative, and will support increased
2 funding for after-school and summer programs
3 as well, including an additional
4 \$49.9 million for the Advantage After School
5 funding stream, which is also in the human
6 services budget.

7 To that end, I'd also like to just
8 highlight a few of those community school
9 programs that are actually receiving funding
10 through the Community Schools Grant
11 Initiative.

12 PS 154 was able to expand its
13 partnership with the YMCA of Greater New York
14 to become a YSchool Community School. As a
15 direct result, PS 154 is able to reduce
16 ratios by placing YSchool staff members in
17 each kindergarten, first-, and second-grade
18 classroom for the entire school day. In just
19 one year, the percentage of kindergartners
20 reading on or above grade level increased by
21 28 percent.

22 Another one in upstate. Wellsville
23 Central School District as well as Auburn
24 School District have both implemented mobile

1 dental clinics that provide dental services
2 to students and families. These are programs
3 that have their funding running out this
4 year, and if we do not restore the Community
5 Schools Grant Initiative funding, those are
6 likely to lose all those services.

7 As New York seeks to ensure that all
8 students graduate high school ready for
9 college and career, it must invest in
10 community schools and in after-school and
11 summer programs as partners to schools in
12 achieving that goal. ASW/NYSAN, my
13 organization, recommends that the Legislature
14 provide at least \$15 million this year to
15 continue the Community Schools Grant
16 Initiative and support increased funding for
17 after-school and summer programs, including
18 the addition of \$49.9 million for the
19 Advantage After School program.

20 We hope that the Legislature and the
21 Governor will take this opportunity to not
22 just meet the immediate need, but also create
23 a plan for future investments that will work
24 towards serving the estimated 1.1 million

1 children who are in need of after-school
2 programming and the 500,000 that are in need
3 of summer programming, so that those benefits
4 of after-school and summer programs can be
5 made available to all of the students and
6 families across New York who actually need
7 them.

8 That concludes my testimony. I will
9 gladly take any questions.

10 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you very
11 much. We'll gladly not give any.

12 (Laughter.)

13 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you for
14 waiting so long.

15 MR. NEITZEY: Excellent. Thank you.

16 SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: New York School Bus
18 Contractors Association, Michael Martucci,
19 president, and Jimmy Hedge, vice president.
20 Was I close?

21 MR. MARTUCCI: Good evening, members
22 of the committee. Thank you for staying so
23 late to listen to us tonight.

24 Just very briefly, my name is Michael

1 Martucci, I'm the owner of Quality Bus
2 Service located in Orange County, New York.
3 I'm also the president of the New York Bus
4 Contractors Association.

5 Here with me to jointly testify is
6 James Hedge. James is the vice president of
7 the Amalgamated Transit Union, Local 1181.
8 So we're here with our partners in labor
9 today to discuss some -- we believe some
10 reforms that would make a big difference in
11 the pupil transportation industry here in
12 New York.

13 So as I said, we're here with our
14 partners in labor to talk about some
15 important reforms. Really the first is one
16 that will help school districts manage their
17 budgets better, protect the hardworking men
18 and women who transport our kids to school
19 each day, and most importantly keep our kids
20 safe.

21 For decades since 1976 the CPI, the
22 Consumer Price Index, has been used to extend
23 pupil transportation contracts here in
24 New York. That index is a failing index in

1 our industry, as you know: CPI has been zero
2 for more years than we can bear. And relying
3 on CPI 20 years ago made sense when that cap
4 was 3 percent.

5 So today what we come to you with is
6 an idea or a suggestion that we would ask
7 that you consider to use ECI, the Employment
8 Cost Index, to extend pupil transportation
9 contracts. We believe this is really
10 important because 65 percent, 70 percent of
11 our costs are labor costs, most commonly.
12 And we believe that ECI is a much better
13 reflection of the costs associated with
14 operating pupil transportation contracts.

15 The second item that we bring to you
16 today is an item that we've come to you
17 before and asked for assistance on. It's
18 around the sales tax on school buses. Here
19 in New York, almost every form of public
20 transportation is tax-exempt, and the sales
21 tax on school buses really is a useless tax
22 because it's a tax that we pass along to our
23 school districts in our service contracts.
24 So we ask that you also consider that item

1 because that would be one way that we could
2 certainly pass along savings to school
3 districts.

4 Third -- and Mr. Hedge will speak more
5 on this -- is a very important issue to our
6 industry, the inclusion of employee
7 protection provisions in school
8 transportation contracts for New York City
9 pupil transportation workers. We believe
10 this is an important initiative because it
11 will protect workers and provide students
12 with a stable and reliable safety-conscious
13 workforce.

14 So I'll turn over the floor to
15 Mr. Hedge.

16 MR. HEDGE: Hi. Thank you for staying
17 here this evening; I know you guys have had a
18 long day.

19 We're here in support of the
20 contractors with the tax on the school buses
21 as well as the CPI bill. We're asking for
22 inclusion of the EPP bill, which is the
23 employee protection provision. And simply
24 stated, all it is is it allows a laid-off

1 driver, escort, or mechanic to be placed on a
2 master hiring list. It doesn't take into
3 account if they're in a union, it doesn't
4 matter if they're non-union. The Board of
5 Education keeps the actual records on the
6 drivers and the escorts, and they become able
7 to be placed in the next available opening,
8 which allows for a pool of experienced,
9 well-trained people to transport the children
10 and who also are very skilled at taking care
11 of handicapped children.

12 They are trained, they take classes,
13 and it eliminates some of the problems that I
14 understand were asked about today with a
15 driver who had become lost and refused to
16 take other kinds of precautions. When you
17 have well-trained people, these kinds of
18 problems disappear.

19 If you have any questions, I'd be more
20 than happy to answer them.

21 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you. Any
22 questions?

23 SENATOR KRUEGER: One quick one.

24 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Yes, Senator.

1 SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you.

2 So the price of oil is plummeting -- I
3 think a previous testifier pointed out he
4 paid, I think he said, \$1.89 a gallon this
5 morning. And I'm just curious how that
6 impacts your costs.

7 MR. MARTUCCI: That's an excellent
8 question.

9 As I had said before, approximately
10 70 percent of our costs are labor costs. So
11 while certainly it is helpful that the cost
12 of oil is down, that represents a very small
13 portion of our cost of doing business.

14 Second, here in New York oftentimes
15 school bus contractors don't purchase the
16 fuel that's utilized to transport students.
17 Many districts, as part of a contractual
18 agreement with their operator, purchase the
19 fuel, and that's done because the district
20 can oftentimes -- more times than not --
21 purchase that fuel at better rates and
22 without paying a tax on that fuel.

23 So oftentimes the savings that we see
24 in fuel and energy aren't savings that are

1 retained by a private business or a school
2 bus contractor, but rather is something that
3 the school district realizes.

4 SENATOR KRUEGER: Do you know what the
5 arrangement is in New York City, where I'm
6 from?

7 MR. MARTUCCI: I'm sorry, I don't know
8 the particulars on the contracts themselves.

9 SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you very
11 much.

12 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you, we
13 appreciate it.

14 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: New York
15 Association of Pupil Transportation, Peter
16 Mannella, executive director.

17 MR. MANNELLA: Good evening, all of
18 you with more stamina than I have. I'm ready
19 for a nap.

20 If this were another day and age I'd
21 share with you that someone slipped me a note
22 but a colleague in the back, Jim Carr, who
23 many of you know, shared with me a Twitter
24 note saying that today in 1780 our New York

1 State Legislature met for the first time in
2 the City of Albany at what was then the old
3 City Hall. So I share that with you,
4 compliments of our colleague in the back of
5 the room.

6 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: It seems like we've
7 been going since 1780.

8 (Laughter.)

9 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: I know. We've been
10 here a long time.

11 MR. MANNELLA: Chairman Farrell,
12 Chairwoman Young --

13 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Yes, Denny was here
14 for that first hearing.

15 (Laughter.)

16 MR. MANNELLA: All right. All
17 seriousness aside.

18 Chairman Farrell, Chairwoman Young --
19 and particularly a note to Chairwoman Young
20 on your assumption of the Finance Committee
21 chair; I look forward to working with you in
22 that capacity and hopefully passing our
23 stop-arm camera bill together with you this
24 year -- I'm pleased to share with you

1 recommendations of the New York Association
2 for Pupil Transportation regarding the
3 Governor's 2016-2017 budget proposal.

4 Our more than 600 members are
5 responsible, with our colleagues in the
6 contractor's association, for the safe and
7 efficient transportation of more than
8 2.3 million children to and from school every
9 day. It is vital that our state continue its
10 investment in school transportation to
11 continue our state's unmatched record of
12 safety for our kids. We're here to discuss
13 some of those investments with you today.

14 I'd like to highlight several key
15 issues or areas from our full statement for
16 you, but before I do that I want to join our
17 voice with the other education lobbies who
18 have called on you to work to eliminate the
19 Gap Elimination Adjustment, restore the
20 money. In many school districts, while it
21 doesn't directly affect transportation,
22 they've looked at transportation to help ease
23 some of the costs that they've had to deal
24 with in the GEA. We've seen safety training

1 programs cut, routes changed, and cutbacks in
2 training for drivers, administrative and
3 dispatch personnel. A lot of things that we
4 use to keep kids safe have been cut as a
5 result of the GEA, and it's time to restore
6 those monies.

7 In the specific area of school
8 transportation, very briefly on a couple
9 points, we're pleased to see that
10 transportation aid is continued to be
11 recognized as expense-based and that the
12 Governor's budget includes \$1.783 billion to
13 accommodate the costs that were incurred by
14 school districts last year, and we support
15 continuation of that into the adopted budget.

16 We appreciate the continued funding of
17 \$400,000 for the Comprehensive School Bus
18 Driver Training Program which this
19 Legislature enacted back in 1997. We're sad
20 to say that it has not been increased from
21 the \$400,000 since 1997, and we've got a lot
22 of new needs that school bus drivers are
23 facing out in their school buses.

24 And we're asking for an increase from

1 \$400,000 to \$500,000 to allow us to do
2 training in special needs transportation and
3 the increased transportation of kids who are
4 in pre-K programs. We've got a lot of
5 violent incidents happening on buses, and we
6 want to be able to train the drivers in how
7 to respond to intrusions on the bus and
8 violent incidents, and some of those things
9 are described further in our testimony.

10 A key part of what we're asking you
11 for is to recognize that pre-K transportation
12 is a cost to school districts. When
13 universal pre-K was created back in the late
14 '90s, transportation was not considered. In
15 2012, there was legislation passed that
16 allowed school districts to provide the
17 transportation, but a gift to you from us,
18 the legislation said no transportation aid
19 would follow if you did transportation for
20 pre-K kids.

21 We're here to say that transportation
22 is a necessity for pre-K programs. Many
23 districts are not doing as much as they might
24 with pre-K because they don't have

1 transportation to get the kids from home to
2 the program and back, and we think that the
3 program would succeed and grow larger and
4 reach its potential if transportation could
5 be addressed.

6 So we're asking that that law passed
7 in 2012 be reconsidered, repealed, and that
8 funding be made available in the
9 transportation aid formula for transportation
10 of pre-K students.

11 Two final points in terms of budget.
12 You just heard from the after-school and
13 community school programs. We've been part
14 of some of the work they're doing. Programs
15 like after-school programs, community
16 schooling, regional high schools and those
17 kinds of initiatives we're doing are all good
18 ideas educationally -- they cost money on
19 transportation end. So as those things move
20 forward, we're going to be looking to you and
21 the Education Department to work with us on
22 ensuring that there's transportation aid
23 available to help us provide those services
24 to the kids.

1 Lastly, in our statement we talk about
2 mandates. We've enumerated about eight
3 mandates that are placed on school
4 transportation programs that cost money, that
5 with some modifications, or in some cases
6 elimination, we could save \$100 million or
7 more by eliminating those and moderating them
8 across the state.

9 We're very proud of the record of
10 safety that we've accomplished in New York
11 State, with the training funds particularly.
12 We've gone from dozens of fatalities back in
13 the 70s, 80s, and 90s to having no fatalities
14 over the past couple of years, and that's a
15 record to be proud of. We're keeping our
16 kids safe. We need to continue to partner
17 with you and ask you for your support in
18 terms of appropriation of political support
19 for the work that the men and women do to
20 keep our children safe every day.

21 And I can take any questions.

22 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you very
23 much.

24 Any questions?

1 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: Just one
2 comment, Mr. Chairman.

3 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Yes.

4 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: I want to thank
5 you for highlighting one of the impediments
6 as to why all school districts have not
7 adopted the pre-K programs. We've been
8 trying -- many of us have been trying to say
9 that the money that's been put in the budget
10 for that purpose is not sufficient because
11 there are so many other costs involved.
12 There's structures that are needed,
13 classrooms that are needed. And I personally
14 never even thought of the issue of
15 transportation, but that's another cost to
16 these school districts as to why they're not
17 adopting the pre-K, they're not just jumping
18 into it.

19 Thank you very much.

20 MR. MANNELLA: And I think you've
21 heard the Syracuse superintendent talk about
22 that for pre-K kids, there and in Rochester,
23 little children having to walk to the pre-K
24 programs. It's not going to happen.

1 And it's a similar problem in the
2 rural areas, where the children have to go
3 long distances to get to the program. They
4 just can't.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: Thank you very
6 much.

7 MR. MANNELLA: Thank you, Assemblyman.

8 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you, Peter,
9 for being here. And just pass along to your
10 members, please, how much we appreciate all
11 of their efforts to keep students safe and
12 sometimes in difficult conditions. And so
13 thank you again.

14 MR. MANNELLA: Thank you, Senator.

15 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you.

16 League of Women Voters, legislative
17 director, Marian Bott.

18 MS. BOTT: Good evening, Chairman
19 Farrell. I am actually not our legislative
20 director; that's Barbara Bartoletti, who's
21 not here this evening.

22 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Oh. Oh, I see.

23 MS. BOTT: It's okay. I am our
24 education and finance specialist, thank you

1 very much.

2 I have to say I feel as though the
3 ghost of John Flanagan is in the room,
4 because a year ago, at about this hour, when
5 we were again at the end of the testimony
6 list, I started talking about the education
7 tax credit and our objections to it, et
8 cetera. And I've known John Flanagan for a
9 long time. And as I was speaking -- within
10 my time limit -- he interrupted me and said,
11 "Marian, we get it, we get it, you don't like
12 it. Is there anything we can do to fix it?"
13 At which time I basically said no.

14 But I was -- because I've known him
15 for a long time, I basically did not refer to
16 him as Senator Flanagan, as I should have. I
17 should have said "Senator Flanagan," but I
18 said "John." So I want to correct the
19 record.

20 I have great respect for the work that
21 all of you do, and I know it's a tough fight
22 on ETC and we will once again be opposing it,
23 and we this year plan to present some more
24 specific reasons at the tax hearings next

1 week. So that, I think, covers that part of
2 our testimony.

3 I spent a lot more time this year on
4 the computer runs, because the other major
5 issue is the tradeoff between eliminating the
6 gap and increasing Foundation Aid and all the
7 issues surrounding CFE. So I wanted to
8 actually see what the Governor had done. And
9 so the reason you have been given this rather
10 lengthy Attachment 2 -- which I would like
11 you to just take a quick glance at, if you
12 don't mind -- what I did is I dug into, on a
13 county-by-county basis, another look at the
14 computer runs that are delivered to us
15 through the DOB in such a form that they're
16 pretty condensed unless you go and get the
17 detailed ones.

18 What I did was I teased out high tax
19 aid, \$223 million of high tax aid, to show
20 where that is distributed throughout the
21 state. And then I teased out the new
22 proposed community schools aid. And I was
23 home watching you all here until 8 o'clock
24 last night at Barbara's house, and so I --

1 appropriate \$17,000 and expect something
2 miraculous to happen, it has to come from a
3 solid partner.

4 So we would not favor using community
5 schools as a budget line to balance shares.
6 We don't agree with shares to begin with, but
7 you certainly shouldn't -- in other words,
8 look at the high tax aid. I noticed that
9 East Hampton gets high tax aid. Look at the
10 formula, we put it in here as our first
11 attachment. It's complicated and it has
12 nothing to do with student need. Perhaps
13 Chairman Farrell remembers -- didn't we get
14 rid of that at one point, high tax aid?

15 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: I don't remember.

16 MS. BOTT: I think we got rid of it
17 and then it came back. I think about 10,
18 12 years ago, we actually got rid of it and
19 maybe it got melded into regional cost. One
20 of the other formulas that we were doing a
21 better job at, actually being on formula --
22 I'm sorry to see that it's \$223 million,
23 which could probably be used more efficiently
24 because there are a lot of hold-harmless

1 districts in it, as you can see.

2 Okay, I think -- I shouldn't keep
3 talking ,because I'm out of time and we will
4 testify in Tax to go through the STAR thing.
5 The STAR thing looks fishy. I think it looks
6 a little fishy, but maybe for good reasons.
7 You have people who are double dipping, and
8 then you have people who maybe will not owe
9 state income tax. And what I'd be interested
10 to know is whether some of those people who
11 don't owe state income tax are people who are
12 retired state workers who therefore -- they
13 wouldn't need a state income tax refund.

14 So we have to make sure that what's
15 not happening is that certain classes of
16 individuals are not being picked out to get
17 out of the STAR pool. I don't think that's
18 what he's trying to do, but I've asked the
19 STAR unit for data and I haven't received it
20 yet. So that's next week.

21 Thank you so much for staying. It's
22 nice to see at least the hard core of you who
23 are the most important leaders of this
24 committee, and their loyal staffs, sitting

1 there. I do appreciate it.

2 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you very
4 much.

5 MS. BOTT: The League of Women Voters
6 appreciates it.

7 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Hopefully you're
8 not watching us at 8 o'clock tomorrow night.

9 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: New York Library
10 Association, Mike Neppl, director of
11 government relations and advocacy.

12 MR. NEPPL: Congratulations, everyone.

13 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: We made it.

14 MR. NEPPL: You made it. I believed
15 in you all along.

16 So I'm last, but certainly not least.
17 And I will end up being the most memorable
18 person today by giving the shortest testimony
19 in respect of how long you've been here.

20 First of all, I'm Mike Neppl, I'm the
21 general counsel and the director of
22 government relations for the New York Library
23 Association. I first want to thank our
24 partners and advocates on the committee and

1 in the Legislature for including the extra
2 \$5 million of funding in last year's enacted
3 budget.

4 Library funding is a core component of
5 our state's educational infrastructure.
6 Libraries are education. Libraries should be
7 fully funded under the law; absent of that,
8 state library aid must increase every year in
9 direct proportion to increases in school aid.
10 It just makes sense.

11 These are three things that we know.
12 Our state's library program is woefully
13 underfunded even at full funding, which would
14 be \$102.6 million. It's millions of dollars
15 less than what is actually needed to
16 effectively run our state's library systems.
17 It is a formula that was devised 30 years ago
18 when people were using libraries much
19 differently than they are now.

20 Library use is surging across the
21 state. It's up 10 percent in the last three
22 years -- 15 percent among women, 15 percent
23 among communities of color, 20 percent among
24 households making less than \$50,000 a year.

1 program has received flat funding for a
2 decade at \$14 million a year. The State
3 Education Department documents a \$2.2 billion
4 need statewide for library capital
5 construction projects.

6 It is far beyond time to increase
7 funding available to local libraries. This
8 is an economic development initiative. The
9 recent New York City enacted budget provided
10 a 10-year, \$300 million capital commitment.
11 We're asking our partners in the Legislature
12 to also take a look at that.

13 I wasn't quite as short as I had hoped
14 to be, but I thank you so much for staying
15 and taking my testimony today. I really
16 appreciate all the work you do on behalf of
17 the library community.

18 I'm happy to take any questions.

19 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you.

20 Mr. Abinanti to close it.

21 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: Thank you,
22 Mr. Speaker.

23 Yes. The high point of library aid
24 was, what, 2008?

1 MR. NEPPL: That's correct, 2007-2008.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: And how much
3 was it at that point?

4 MR. NEPPL: It was \$102.7 million.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: One hundred
6 two. So if we applied inflation to the 102
7 in 2008, what would be this year's number?

8 MR. NEPPL: I believe, considering
9 inflation, it would be somewhere in the
10 \$129 million.

11 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: One hundred
12 twenty-nine.

13 And how much did we give the libraries
14 last year?

15 MR. NEPPL: Ninety-one-point-six in
16 last year's --

17 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI:
18 Ninety-one-point-six. Thank you.

19 And you said the unmet needs as
20 estimated by the New York State Education
21 Department, the unmet needs -- the unmet
22 capital needs for libraries is \$2.2 billion?

23 MR. NEPPL: That's correct. And
24 that's --

1 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: And how much
2 money -- go ahead.

3 MR. NEPPL: I'm sorry. That's largely
4 the result of more than half of local public
5 libraries in New York are more than 60 years
6 old, and another third are more than 30 years
7 old.

8 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: And how much
9 money do we put in capital every year?

10 MR. NEPPL: Fourteen million dollars a
11 year, of which we're very grateful for, but
12 we're certainly asking for an increase.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI: Okay. Thank
14 you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

15 MR. NEPPL: Thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: Thank you very
17 much.

18 We are adjourned.

19 MR. NEPPL: Have a good night.

20 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you. We love
21 libraries, so thank you so much.

22 MR. NEPPL: Thank you, Senator.

23 CHAIRMAN FARRELL: We will adjourn
24 until tomorrow at 9:30, Environmental

1 Conservation.

2 (Whereupon, the budget hearing concluded
3 at 7:13 p.m.)

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